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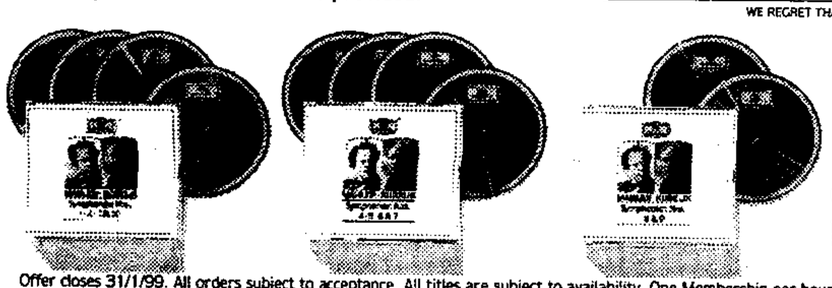

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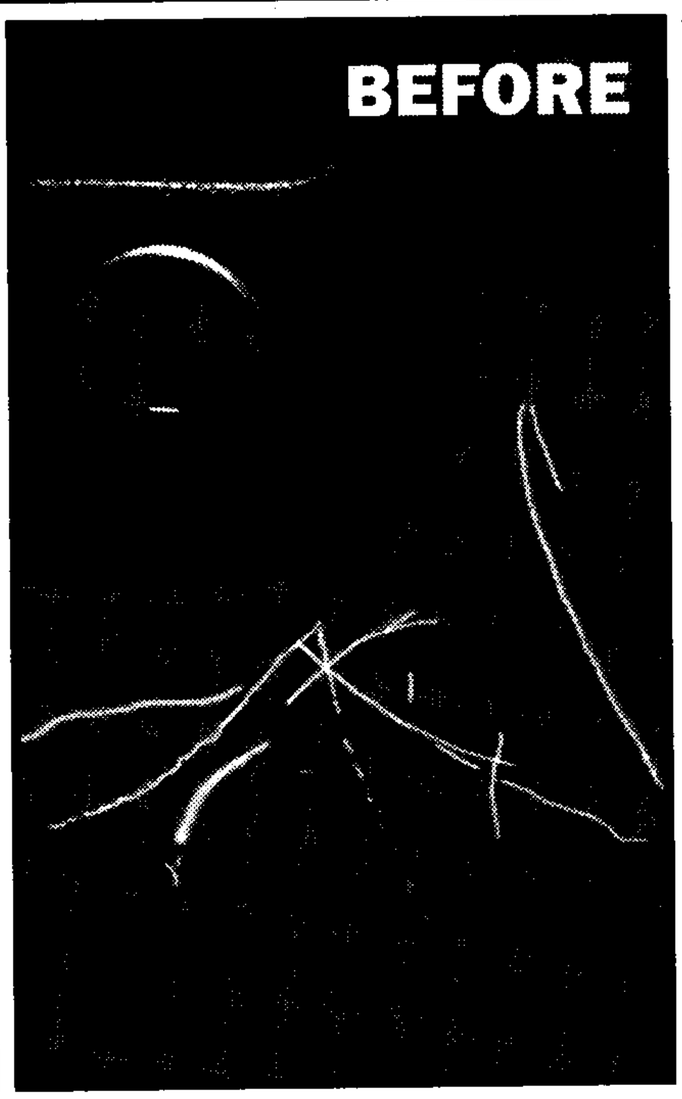

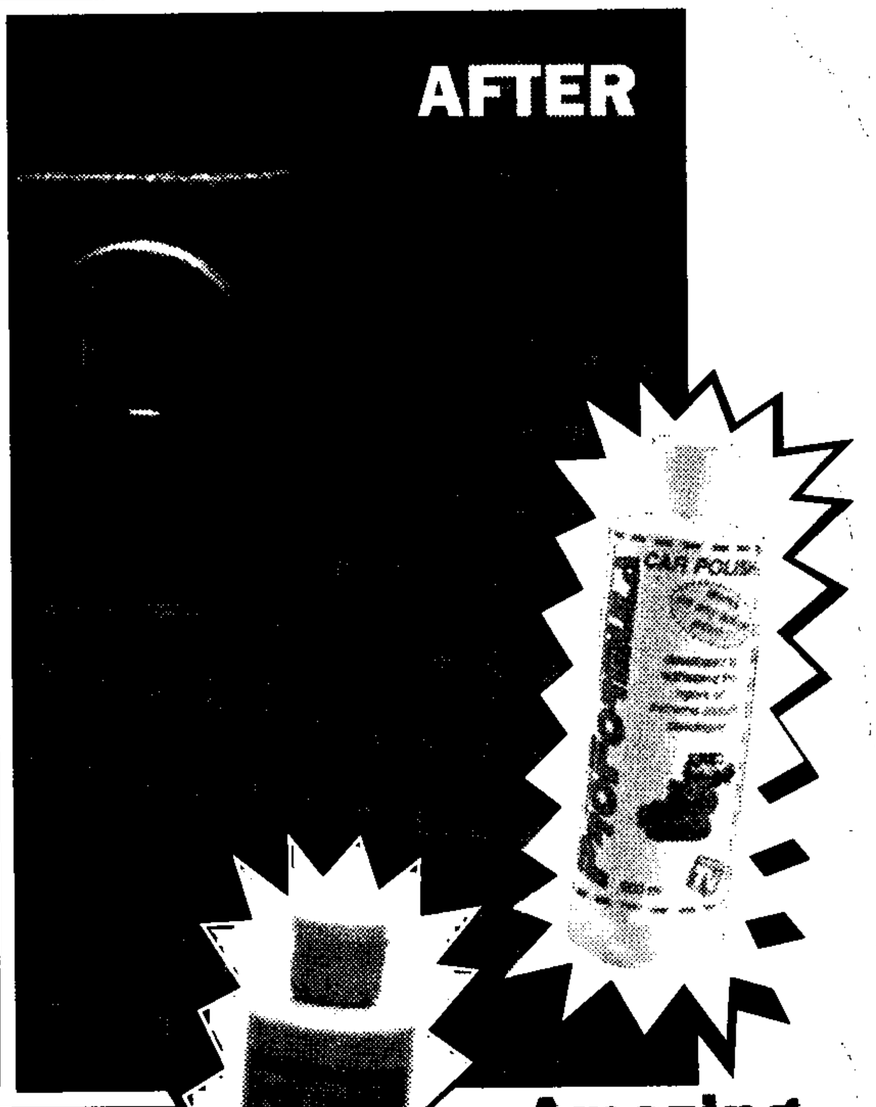

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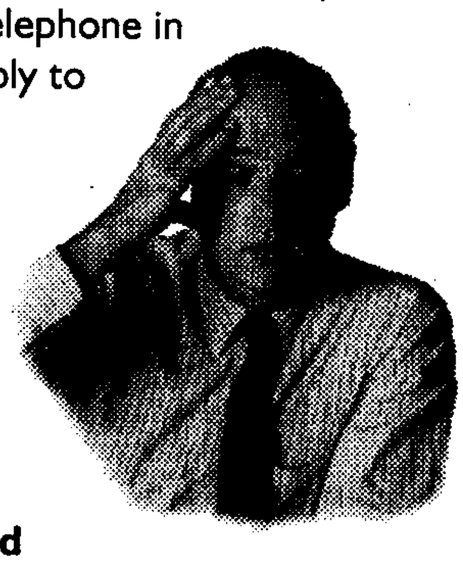

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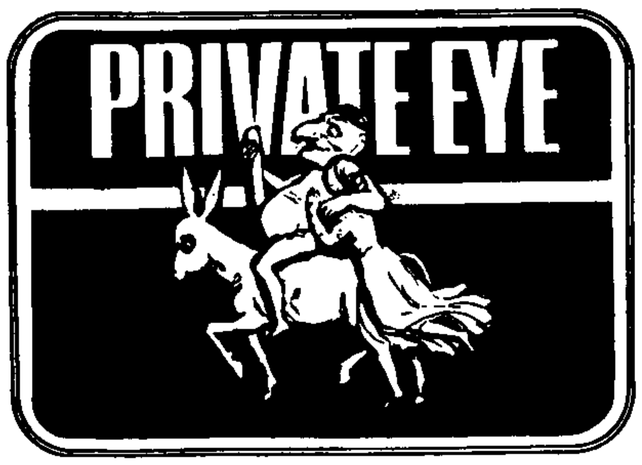


COLOUR SECTION

THE LOBBY PARTY CONFERENCE

CLEAR proof of Labour's commitment to cash-for-access comes in a memorandum from party organiser Chris Lane to "all MPs and MEPs in the South East Region and any staff or guests accompanying you to party conference in Blackpool".

Lane urges the MPs: "Please make a priority in your conference diaries for Thursday evening for a reception sponsored by Seeboard PLC. This is a generously-sponsored event, on condition that we enable the company to maintain contact with regional MPs and MEPs." In other words: come and talk to the bosses of privatised Seeboard which supplies electricity to the south-east, or the party doesn't get the sponsoring money. If that's not cash for access, what is?

The reception was due to take place at Yates Wine Lodge, Blackpool, on 1 October. The subject of pay awards for the fat cats of the electricity industry was not high on the agenda

LANE's memo also included an invitation to MPs and delegates to another reception on Sunday 27 September for a "regional briefing" by Margaret Beckett, leader of the House of Commons.

Lane insisted sternly that "nearly all will usually attend for the policy brief from the NEC on issues at conference". But it wasn't just the briefing that made the meeting worthwhile. "The event," wrote Lane, "is very generously sponsored by Eastern Group PLC and therefore refreshments will be excellent."

THERE were a lot of ill-tempered references to Virgin trains on the first day of the conference as the Branson Expresses were shunted into the usual sidings and got to Blackpool North the usual hour and a half late.

It was considered bad taste to recall the leader's happy face smiling from a Virgin engine cab when he took a freebie journey from Branson during the election. Even worse taste was to blame the real culprits, Railtrack. Delegates, as they arrived at the station, were welcomed by smiling young men and women in glamorous t-shirts who presented them with packs of information about hotels, local travel and important sites in Blackpool. Who paid for this service? A clue was the single word printed on the back of the packs: RAILTRACK.

GORDON BROWN was reportedly livid at GMB union leader John Edmonds' "greedy bastards" attack on highly paid executives — which must seem a bit odd to Labour members who recall Brown's pre-election attacks on "fat cats".

Perhaps the reason for Brown's change of heart became obvious to delegates at the Labour conference where ID cards were sponsored by supermarket chain Somerfield plc.

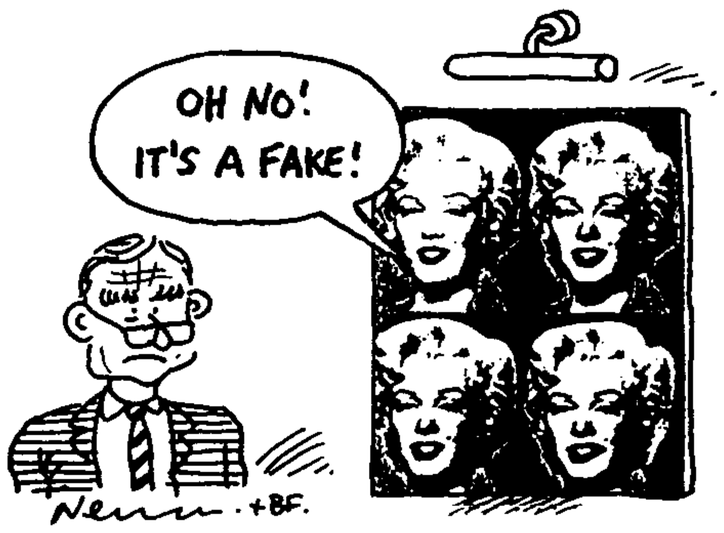
Somerfield went public in 1996 and merged with Kwik Save last year. Stock market flotation and mergers are prime triggers for executive greed, and true to form it has been bonanza time in the supermarket chain's boardroom.

Phil Coates, David Coles and Derek Pretty all resigned at the merger. They walked away with £374,000, £401,000 and £376,000 respectively. David Simons has stayed on as chief executive, tucking away a handy £462,000 a year. By contrast, a check-out operator at the supermarket earns £144.79 for a 38-hour week (or £7,529 a year).

THE smooth-talking health minister and rising Blairite star Alan Milburn is in hot water again after appearing on GMTV to discuss the issue of "Getting Nurses back into the NHS".

When Milburn was told he would be joined on the interview couch with a real live nurse who would explain to viewers that Milburn's plans were next to useless if he carried on refusing to pay a living wage to health staff, the stroppy Milburn simply refused to share the sofa with her and insisted she be interviewed separately.

Sadly for Milburn, the nurse in question proved to be the partner of Geoff Martin, the no nonsense convenor of Unison's mighty London Region, who is now an angry man.



IN the Colour Section of *Eye* 959 (4 September 1998) we alleged that Mr Justice Millet had accused Lord Irvine QC of prolonging a case brought by Macmillan Inc against three Swiss banks by "unnecessarily spending more than a fortnight arguing that it should be heard in New York rather than under British law", and that Lord Irvine had "profited hugely from the delay since he was being paid $5,000 a day by Macmillan".

Although Lord Irvine was the main counsel for Macmillan, and accepts responsibility for the New York law point being argued, he tells us that he was not present while it was being argued and therefore received no payment for this particular aspect of the case. We apologise for this inaccuracy.

● We would add, however, that Millet's criticisms went far beyond the narrow New York question and covered the whole nine-month trial — for most of which Lord Irvine was indeed present and collecting a large fee. "The pleadings filled nearly 1,000 pages," the judge complained. "They obscured the issues… The parties' opening and closing submissions with accompanying authorities filled a further 40 files. Much of this was unnecessary. There was a huge amount of duplication and unnecessary elaboration."

Does Lord Irvine really think none of these comments reflects on his own conduct as the lead counsel for Macmillan Inc? Since his private secretary first wrote protesting at the piece in *Eye* 959 and threatening a libel action, we have repeatedly asked this question, but the lord chancellor and his private secretary have declined to answer.

● *Potomacs and Kettles: Hackwatch* 7
● *More Blackpool illumination: HP Sauce* . 8, 9
● *World service special* 11
● *Portillo's Progress: Diary* 24
● *The Hamilton hagiography* 25
● *Slicker: Betting on Ladbroke* 28

STREET OF SHAME

IT'S official: the recession is coming and one of the first victims is Michael Prescott, chief political correspondent of the *Sunday Times*.

For the Labour party conference Prescott had been booked into the upmarket Imperial Hotel, Blackpool, along with his editor John Witherow and deputy editor Martin Ivens, while lowlier hacks from the paper were billeted in the cheaper Boston Hotel.

Two weeks ago, however, Rupert Murdoch paid a flying visit to Wapping to warn his editors that belts must be tightened in anticipation of the economic downturn. Panic-stricken executives, searching desperately for a futile gesture, promptly cancelled Prescott's room at the Imperial and booked him into the Boston instead. To add to his humilation, he was forced to share a room with Jonathon Carr-Brown, a junior political hack.

Meanwhile other *Sunday Times* staff in the Boston were told that they too must "double up" — even if this meant sharing a bed. Insight editor David Leppard was so revolted at the prospect of having to sleep under the same duvet as his deputy Chris Hastings that he decided to take a separate room and pay for it himself.

FACT: The *Sunday Times* makes a profit of £1.3m *every week.*

***OBSERVER* hack John Sweeney has long harboured an irritating tendency to include himself in his copy. So much so that when he left for Malaysia to write about the country's brutal junta, his editor Roger Alton warned him to find something other than "I" to write about... or else.**

Sweeney fingered the brim of his risible trademark fedora and promised to do just that. However, only days later Alton was shown an AP wire from Kuala Lumpur called "BC-Malaysia-Police-Press". In it was a colourful account of a press conference during which the Malaysian chief of police told an impudent, foghorn voiced "British reporter" to "shut up" — demanding in front of the world's press corps that John Sweeney — for it was he — come to his room immediately for a stout session with a rubber-truncheon.

"I thought I told Sweeney to keep himself out of the fucking story," raged Alton as a foreign desk minion poured him a soothing Bisodol. Pointing out that Sweeney could face arrest and maltreatment in a country that cares nothing for basic democratic freedoms, the underling at last succeeded in brightening his master's mood. "Yes, that's very true," said Alton. "Every cloud has a silver lining."

Number crunchings

4000

= Column inches devoted by British broadsheets in a week to Starr Report

2000

= Column inches devoted by British broadsheets in a week to *all* major British news stories

STAFF at the *Independent* are astonished at the return of gullible Irishman Leonard Doyle in the influential role of foreign editor. Doyle left the *Observer* last month — where he was also foreign editor — after a series of blazing rows with colleagues who felt he was rather too close to British intelligence for comfort.

As a stringer for the *Indie* in New York a few years ago, Doyle demonstrated his credulity by "revealing" that the Bosnians had shelled their own bread queue in Sarajevo — a false piece of Serb propaganda he picked up from equally credulous Canadian "peacekeepers" at the UN headquarters.

Doyle parted company from the *Indie* soon afterwards, but not before his antics at the UN had brought him into contact with the British resident MI6 officer there — whose cover name, he later told colleagues, was "Peter Noonan".

When Doyle washed up in London with a job on the *Observer*'s foreign desk, he was delighted to discover that Noonan had also been posted back to Britain. "Why don't you give me stories," he asked his chum, "the way you do to the *Telegraph*?" Sure enough *Observer* hacks were soon despatched on bizarre tales provided by the man from MI6.

In August 1997 investigators David Connett and Jonathan Calvert went to Glasgow airport at Doyle's suggestion to confront a pizza merchant whom British intelligence reckoned was also an exporter of nuclear parts to Iran. An MI6 surveillance team gave the hacks blow-by-blow details of the man's movements. This murky story might have caused more questioning of Doyle's journalistic methods had it not been swamped by news of Princess Diana's death in that Sunday's *Observer*.

Unease about his MI6 connection came to a head when Doyle tried to persuade the diplomatic editor, Shyam Bhatia, to meet "the men in shiny suits", as he termed them, for a "private chat". Bhatia protested, fearing that his position might be compromised. The *Observer*'s American correspondent, Ed Vulliamy, became equally alarmed when he was pushed to follow up lurid "hot tips" from the spooks. The excitable Doyle threatened to sue him for libel, claiming that his life had been put in danger by Vulliamy's allegations, and then bolted from the *Observer* — a decision greeted at the paper with trebles all round.

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S. Wales Evening Post

ALAN BORG, director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, has learned the hard way that Fleet Street hacks are a dozy bunch. Nor do many of them possess much in the way of a sense of humour, particularly those who work on the posh papers, despite their love of "irony" and all that.

In the summer Borg wrote an editorial for the *V&A Magazine* in which he joked that perhaps the museum should come up with another name because the current one was not "cool" or "snappy" enough. A prize of a bottle of champagne was offered for the best alternative — but the article concluded that, like New York's Met or Paris's Louvre, the name was so well-known that it did *not* really need to change: "A descriptive name tag is positively not required if you are well enough known for what you actually do... there is no doubt that the V&A is in the same category... we do not need to worry about our name. It is what we do that matters." Borg thought it was clear enough that he had been *Making A Joke.*

Alas the humour was insufficiently heavy for most of Fleet Street. "Museum boss wants 'snappy' new name for V&A" said a page one story in the *Independent on Sunday,* which went on to quote "appalled" art critic Brian Sewell, who said Borg must be "bonkers" and called for him to be sacked. Versions of the story also appeared in the *Sunday Times*, the *Mirror*, the *FT*, the *Grauniad*, the *Telegraph* and the *Express* — and drew scores of letters of protest. Borg has now resolved to give up the comedy and stick to the day job.

THE *Sun* was clearly on to something with its sensitive coverage of the death of Fergie's mother Susan Barrantes in a car crash in Argentina (pages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

CHILLING ECHOES OF DI was the to-the-point headline of the newly upmarket tabloid. Royal reporter Charlie Rae then revealed an astonishing catalogue of coincidences:

- Fergie learned of the death her mother, like that of Diana, via a phone call in the middle of the night.
- Mrs Barrantes, like Diana, was not wearing a seat belt.
- The last time Fergie saw her mother was at a villa in the south of France where, er, she had once been on holiday with Diana.

But this is not the whole story. *Eye* investigators have uncovered even more incredible facts, missed by the *Sun*.

- The dead women were both... female.
- Both had five-letter names.
- Mrs Barrantes died a year and a bit — to the day — after Di.
- Both had been married to aristocratic polo players without chins.
- Both accidents happened in foreign countries which had once been at war with Britain.
- Both were shagging foreign chaps.
- Neither had ever had any intention of marrying Dodi Fayed.

Stops you thinking, doesn't it?

"They don't really know what they're saying – they just mimic sounds they've heard!"

"WE declare war on frump," cried the *Daily Mail* in the run-up to London Fashion Week, launching a campaign against dull, unflattering clothes.

The rag deplored the season's look — "the frumpiest and most unattractive [fashions] we've ever seen". "Leading British fashion designer" Ben De Lisi complained about the "drab" look of plain grey pleated skirts and flat shoes; and "TV fashion expert" Caryn Franklin wrote: "There's no way anyone is going to see me walking around in a frumpy long skirt and flat shoes, or a knee-length pleated skirt".

Two days earlier the *Mail* ran another two-page fashion spread: "Cheat's chic — how to achieve designer looks at High Street prices". And the desirable look it advised readers to emulate? Er, it consisted of "the full-length pleated skirt... basic V-neck jumpers... (and) flat pumps". In fashionable grey, natch.

IN a recent *Evening Standard* article Victoria Coren explains why Monica Lewinsky makes a hopeless mistress, mooning around and writing soppy love letters.

She comments: "If you were a nice girl, you wouldn't be fooling around with someone's husband in the first place", and says "there are even women who are desperately in love with their married boyfriends, wish to be with them more than anything, but still don't want to break up the marriage".

This is all essentially autobiography rather than journalism, and it is difficult to resist pointing out that Ms Coren is the mistress of TV producer Harry Thompson, made famous by the dumped wife's vitriolic column in the *Daily Mail*.

However, the *Eye* was going to resist the temptation until a copy of the article was personally brought round to our offices by a journalist from the *Standard* — none other than Ms Coren herself.

WHILE 17 *Observer* **hacks face redundancy as a "cost-cutting measure", their ex-boss Will "Stakeholder" Hutton is pursuing the Third Way by collecting a huge pay rise as his reward for being kicked upstairs to the sinecure of "editor-in-chief".**

The hacks' annoyance was redoubled when they saw that the *Observer* had given over most of a page to a piece about the *Marxism Today* brainstorming weekend at which "renowned intellectuals" — such as, er, Will Hutton — had put the world to rights.

Jay Rayner, who wrote the article, had been careful to avoid arslikhan references to his editor-in-chief. Imagine his surprise, then, when the printed version claimed that it was Hutton who "defined the eventual position of the whole conference". Unknown hands had inserted copious quotes from Hutton, including his assessment of a speech delivered on the Saturday morning by Tony Blair's policy adviser Geoff Mulgan. Since Hutton didn't arrive until Saturday night, he hadn't even been at Mulgan's seminar — but this fact was tactfully omitted.

Hutton's own speech, delivered on the Sunday morning, was something a fiasco: after 30 minutes of waffle he suddenly announced "I've run into the sand. I've lost it." Rayner duly noted the *debacle*, and quoted David Edgar: "I think you could call it Will's epiphany." But the same unknown hands then added a quote from Hutton claiming that his breakdown was entirely deliberate: "In effect, I was setting out the Blairite position... But that wasn't where I wanted the argument to go, so I stopped to come back later."

On Radio 4's review of the Sunday papers Germaine Greer denounced the *Observer* article as an outrageous example of "lickspittle journalism". What she didn't realise was that the lickspittle in question, frantically hyping up the brilliance of Will Hutton, was none other than the Great Stakeholder himself.

FOOTBALL NEWS

THE union of Scottish football managers has struck another blow against the employers.

Not long after he was taken on as manager of Leeds United, George "Bung" Graham was chatting to his friend and fellow-Scot Alex Ferguson, manager of Manchester United. Graham taunted his friend about the two managers' respective salaries, boasting that he, "Bung", was squeezing £1m a year out of Leeds.

Shocked and incensed, Ferguson asked to borrow a copy Graham's contract, which he promptly took to his boss, Manchester United fat cat Martin Edwards. The result was an immediate £100,000 rise for Ferguson, though his salary at £800,000 is still not as high as his canny friend's at Leeds.

Graham is now negotiating to take over at Tottenham Hotspur, though he may have trouble getting Spurs chairman Alan Sugar to agree to the sort of rise to which he is accustomed. Whatever sum he achieves, at Leeds or Spurs, Alex Ferguson will be close behind him.

HACKWATCH SPECIAL Potomacs and Kettles

ANY *Guardian* **readers who missed the four-hour video of Bill Clinton's testimony were given plenty of versions to choose from.**

"For the occasion he had chosen a dark jacket, a white shirt, a plain green tie and a pale, pale face," Julian Borger reported from Washington. Further down the page, however, Mark Lawson noted that "his eyes were as pouchy as a knocked-out boxer's, his face spasmodically bright red even before the embarrassing questions started." Meanwhile, Hugo Young insisted that "the president's first appearance was of a man who expected the worst. He was sitting there, cold and white of face..."

Clearly President Clinton, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. To Martin Kettle, Washington correspondent of the *Grauniad*, he is is a "deeply serious and potentially even a great progressive leader"; to Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, the *Telegraph*'s resident Bill-baiter, he is as "a very, very, very bad man". What both papers have in common is that their reporting simply reflects their prejudices — thus leaving the poor readers hopelessly confused and surprised by every new turn of events.

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR Guardian

27 January 1998: "One thing can be said with some confidence. Bill Clinton is not about to become the only United States president of the 20th century to be impeached," Martin Kettle reports. "For the Republicans, a damaged Clinton who remains in office is more valuable than a discredited Clinton who quits the scene." No doubt Kettle had quite forgotten this when he wrote on 21 September, with equal confidence, that the Republican right would stop at nothing "to win its battle with Mr Clinton at last, by impeaching him and driving him from the White House".

8 February: When the American media first printed the allegations about Monica Lewinsky "plenty of people in the White House were convinced that their time was up. Talk of the Clinton presidency in free-fall was quick and commonplace..." And yet, less than a week later, the worst is already over — or so Kettle assures us. "Amazingly, Clinton has benefited from the crisis that had once seemed certain to wound him, possibly fatally. In the White House the true believers say he has not only survived; he has triumphed."

4 April 1998: "Bill Clinton may not be out of the procedural woods yet, but the climactic danger point has now been passed," Kettle notes with relief after the collapse of Paula Jones's lawsuit. True, Kenneth Starr is still investigating the Lewinsky affair, "but the disorientating illusion that Clinton himself, and with him the system of American government and the political culture surrounding it, was under near-terminal attack has now gone. The vertiginous sense of political and cultural instability which surged through Washington in mid-January, when the Lewinsky crisis erupted, has disappeared." Getting ever more ecstatic, Kettle adds that it isn't only Clinton who has survived: "It is perhaps even true to say that the culture of reason has survived too... Against all prediction, the stage is set for Clinton and Clintonism to command the political arena with fresh authority through to the end of his term."

1 June 1998: "President Clinton will refuse to testify if the independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr attempts to subpoena him to appear before a grand jury investigating the Monica Lewinsky affair," Kettle reveals.

15 August: Two days before Clinton testifies to Kenneth Starr's grand jury, Kettle tries his hand at another prediction by dismissing rumours that the president might admit to an affair with Monica Lewinsky. "It really would be very surprising if Clinton dramatically changed his line over Lewinsky two days from now. Having denied the affair with her for so long, and having won such public sympathy in the face of Starr's remorseless inquiries, he will be risking a very great deal both legally and politically if he now admits that the independent counsel has been right after all in his suspicions." Kettle goes on to pay lavish tribute to Clinton as a deeply serious and progressive politician who has single-handedly kept the flame of liberalism alight. "That's why Tony Blair recently called him a force for good in the world... This Clinton is not an absurd figure, but an almost heroic one."

22 September: Whoops! "Mr Clinton's presidency," Kettle now informs us, "may well be seen by future historians as it is seen today by many generally pro-Democrat opinion formers and Democratic voters — as a huge historic disappointment consisting mainly of strategic retreats in a right-wing era and as a catastrophic personal let-down for a generation of American liberals." And for a certain British liberal hack, too?

Daily Telegraph

24 June 1996: Can Clinton win a second term? No chance, says Ambrose Evans-Pritchard. "The Democrats are running out of time. Unless they take steps to install a new presidential candidate over the next few weeks they risk being chained to a ticking time-bomb — scheduled to detonate during the autumn campaign, if not before."

26 January 1998: Emerging from a long sulk at Clinton's victory, Evans-Pritchard takes out his wrath on the special prosecutor. "Billed as a Republican rottweiler, a right-wing extremist and a fanatical prosecutor with a mission to destroy the Clinton presidency, Mr Starr is better characterised as a tame and placid man with the zeal of a plump sheep. Indeed, Mr Clinton should be thankful that his so-called nemesis is in reality a Washington insider who craves the approval of the mainstream press, and hates to rock the boat..."

30 July: The sheep has miraculously become a racehorse. "Kenneth Starr has at last got the bit between his teeth," Evans-Pritchard reports admiringly. "I hesitate to conclude that Bill Clinton is doomed, however."

25 August: Evans-Pritchard duly concludes that Clinton is doomed. "This time there is very little doubt. The whole of political Washington now knows that the game is almost up. This looks like the end of the road."

10 September: As Kenneth Starr delivers his report to Congress, Evans-Pritchard helpfully explains why it concentrates solely on Paula Jones and Monica Lewinsky, with nothing about Filegate, Travelgate or Whitewater. "This is not because the [other] evidence is exculpatory, but because prosecutors prefer not to mix a rock-solid indictment with charges that are even fractionally less compelling. Mr Starr, in effect, is eliminating Mr Clinton with a single shot. But it is well aimed. The Starr Report, I hazard, will be more than enough."

12 September: Or not, as the case may be. "Kenneth Starr may have made a mistake by confining this report to obstruction of the Paula Jones sexual harassment," Evans-Pritchard grumbles. "This could delay matters. It is the worst of all possible outcomes."

14 September: Evans-Pritchard is now very cross indeed. "Kenneth Starr has failed to catch his prey. I am forced to conclude that Mr Starr has lost his wits. He and his team of prosecutors have allowed their personal animus against the White House to consume them."

22 September: After watching the video of Clinton's evidence, Evans-Pritchard changes his mind yet again. "Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel, has plainly achieved his preliminary purpose of discrediting the word of this president... After this softening-up exercise, Mr Starr probably feels strong enough to move on to the next stage... I hear that he is now turning with zeal to matters of financial fraud, obstruction of justice, misuse of the FBI and witness intimidation." The two grand juries are still very much alive, and "if my information is correct" — always a big if with Evans-Pritchard — the excellent Starr will soon be bringing "criminal indictments at the highest level of the US government. Those who say that this scandal does not rise to the level of Watergate may have to eat their words."

Perhaps they could be joined at this verbal banquet by Evans-Pritchard.

THE LOBBY PARTY CONFERENCE (Continued)

THE most serious problem facing delegates at the Labour party conference In Blackpool was how to cope with the deluge of corporate invitations. These included:

MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER: Business in Focus meeting, Rentokil's Sir Clive Thompson (see Footnotes, page 26), the CBI's Adair Turner and Peter Mandelson — and a free buffet. A Road Haulage Association reception, hosted by former Tory minister Steven Norris, 5.30-7pm at the Imperial; and at almost the same time — 6.30 to 8pm — at the Stakis Hotel, a reception thrown by Powergen, another privatised electricity company. There was an Advertising Association reception at the Imperial from 8.30 to 10.00, and then back to the Stakis for a champagne reception thrown by Lord Marshall and Robert Ayling of British Airways.

TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER: During the conference lunch break, there was a reception at the Imperial, with the theme "Social Exclusion in the Eastern Regions", hosted by the not very socially excluded directors of privatised Anglian Water. When conference broke at 5pm, delegates hurried back to the Imperial for a reception thrown by the Electricity Association, the electricity fat cats' league. Many left soon after six for the Stakis for a reception thrown by the drinks combine Allied Domecq, and few missed the 9pm start of one of the most sumptuous receptions of the conference — British Sky Broadcasting's shindig at the Imperial from 9 to 11. Late at night, there was a choice between receptions hosted by the Guinness giant Diageo (Johnny Walker whisky and Smirnoff Vodka available on demand since Diageo produce both) — from 10 to midnight at the Imperial; and BAA, the private airports monopoly, where Thatcherite chairman Sir John Egan dispensed champagne and fish and chips.

WEDNESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER: In the mid-day break there was a magnificent buffet lunch thrown by the "tobacco alliance", representing 26,000 retailers who sell cigarettes. In the evening there was a reception thrown by LWT in the Baronial Hall of the Winter Gardens, followed by unlimited whisky at the Scotch Whisky Association reception at the Stakis at 6.30 and (if you were lucky) a private dinner thrown by the Paper Federation at the De Vere Hotel at 7.30 for 8. Late at night (11-12.30) delegates flocked to the Imperial for more champagne, a Lancashire hot pot supper and "stimulating conversation" all at the expense of the Quarry Products Association.

THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER: The day started with breakfast in the Neville room at the Stakis at the expense of the Freight Transport Association whose president delighted delegates with a charming speech on the need for lorries in towns. The day's big party was at the Stakis, thrown by Sandy Walkington, head of corporate affairs at British Telecom, though there was stiff competition from a bash — also at the Stakis — hosted by the genial old Tory Sir Michael Bishop, chairman of British Midland airline. Late in the evening, also at the Stakis, the Independent Family Brewers of Britain welcomed delegates to a reception and supper, from 8.30 to 11. Those who lasted the course could hardly summon up the strength to sing Auld Lang Syne let alone the Red Flag.

JUST FANCY THAT!

Mrs Evlynne: "He thinks like a Tory and talks like a radical and that's so important these days."

— Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*

SHELL OIL's announcement of 2,000 job losses was tastefully made *after* Gordon Brown spoke at the Shell-sponsored *New Statesman* conference. It might have embarrassed the chancellor to speak on an "agenda for business" in the next century flanked by Shell chief executive Chris Fay after the company had announced mass sackings.

Shell's sponsorship is part of the trend of oil companies sucking up to "new" Labour. But it will be hard for any company to compete with BP's grip on the cabinet. Ex-BP chief executive Lord Simon's role in government is well known, but another BP man, Nick Butler, plays an important role too.

He has had a lifetime's involvement with both Labour and BP. He helped Neil Kinnock in the move away from unilateralism in the 80s while working for the oil giant. He has also made the transition to "new" Labour circles very smoothly, setting up a think tank (the Centre for European Reform) with Blair's head of research David Milliband.

Butler also sits on the UK advisory board of the shadowy British American Project for the Successor Generation which claims to groom new leaders and involves many "new" Labour stars (Peter Mandelson, Mo Mowlam, George Robertson, Chris Smith to name but a few).

The importance of government decisions to the oil companies was emphasised recently when energy minister John Battle announced competition for new offshore exploration licences. BP, Shell and Ranger Oil (see last Eye for Ranger's conference sponsorship) are all bidding.

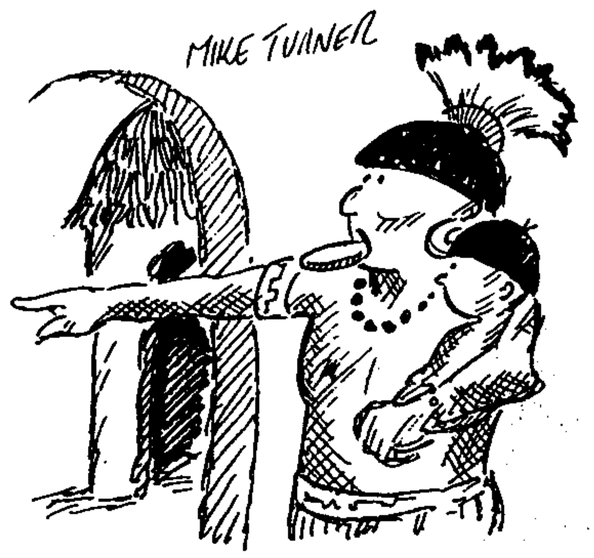
SIEMENS, the German engineering and electronics giant that is closing its semi-conductor factory in the north-east, has offered to repay £50m in grants it received from the government. So far Labour has been too polite to ask — even though not a single job will have been created.

This isn't the first time Siemens has done well out of the government. Before the election it won a huge contract to computerise the immigration service's paperwork in a private finance initiative (PFI). The project codenamed "Casework" was supposed to have come on-line last year. It didn't.

Instead Siemens offered a "paper based" pilot until the computer system was ready for action. Luckily the immigration service still paid Siemens (the amount is not disclosed) for its non-working system.

Siemens also has a history of making unusual payments. In 1992 five managers were convicted of giving DM3.2m to Munich officials to help the company win a sewerage contract. In 1996 Singapore barred Siemens from bidding for government contracts until 2001 due to its involvement in a massive public bribery scandal. Spanish courts probed Siemens' involvement in financing the high speed rail link between Madrid and Seville in 1993. Siemens admitted paying $7.8m to "consulting" firms allegedly linked to the ruling Socialist party but claimed the pay-outs were "normal business practice".

At least Tony Blair has found a "Third Way" to deal with Siemens. In most cases the company has been accused of paying government officials in return for contracts. In Britain the government pays Siemens... for doing nothing.



"There isn't a jungle out there, son"

THE pathetic spectacle of Tony Blair sucking up to Bill Clinton in New York was justified by the president's support for Northern Ireland. But how deep does that interest go?

With the Starr report nearing completion the Omagh bombing provided a splendid chance for tasteless photo-calls as much as an opportunity to demonstrate genuine concern. In particular the trip to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital enabled Cherie Blair to replace Princes Di as a Florence Nightingale for the new millennium.

Revolting television pictures showed her and Hillary Clinton patronising the bed ridden. What they *didn't* show was three more patients and their nurses who had been brusquely hidden behind screens by a combined Downing Street-White House goon squad.

Staff Nurse Suzanne Robinson has since written to the *Belfast Telegraph* explaining that "as one of the nurses privileged to care for some of the Omagh victims, I would like to express how angry and disappointed we felt about [the VIP visit]. Bodyguards spoke to nursing staff in a rude and abrupt fashion. They ordered us to curtain off other patients... so that Mrs Clinton wouldn't have to shake hands with them [for the cameras] and waste time..."

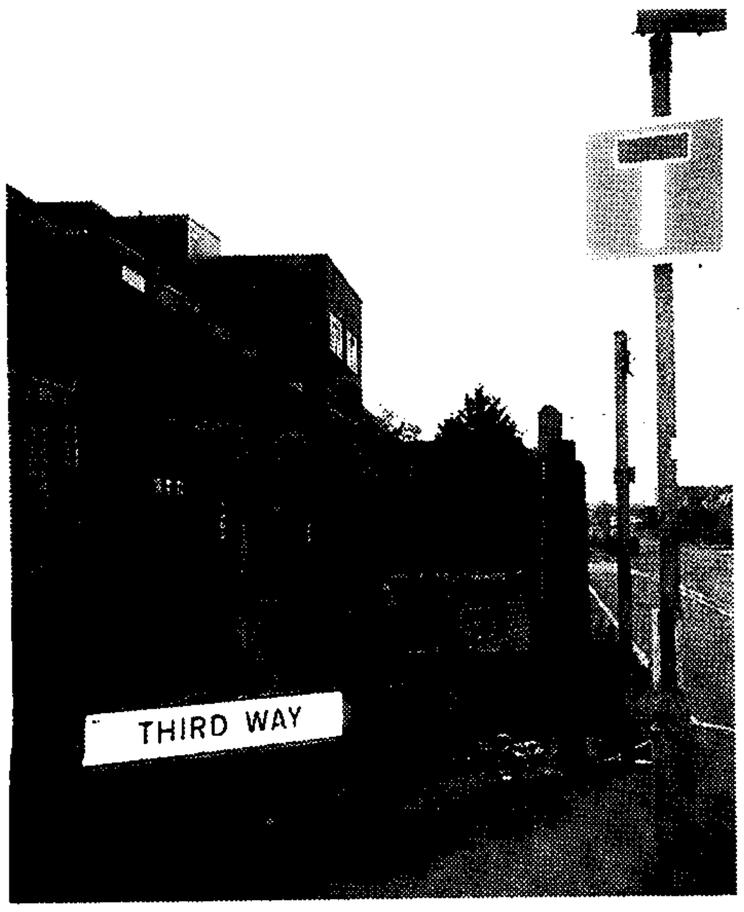
Ms Robinson continued by suggesting (correctly) that the VIPs and their accompanying press officers didn't "genuinely care for the victims of the Omagh bombing or their carers. This was just a publicity stunt."

The NHS trust which runs the hospital has backed the nurse's complaint. Two managers visited the "hidden" patients to apologise, and a trust spokesman said: "We were quite distressed when we heard what had happened. No one wanted to cause a scene when Mrs Clinton and Mrs Blair were at the hospital. As an apology we sent flowers as soon as they left."

WHEN Ray Challinor, an eminent historian and former confidant to Eddie Milne, rebel MP and scourge of north-east corruption and T. Dan Smith in particular, recently applied to rejoin the Labour party after some years' absence, he was asked why he wanted to do so.

Challinor told his interviewer — one Eddie Dark, of North Tyneside Labour Party, that he believed in full employment, a free NHS and a welfare state that provided security from cradle to grave. Such timeless Labour values failed to impress Dark, however, who *immediately* told the veteran campaigner that he "was not eligible to join".

Wembley Industrial Park



Submitted by Dan Langan.

WITH the prime minister busily outlining the government's plans for action in some of the country's worst housing estates, lobby journalists attending the Downing Street press conference soon began shifting about on their seats as boredom took hold.

When an estate near the prime minister's former Islington home was identified by the PM as ripe for demolition, general ribaldry broke out. That is, until the PM's chief enforcer Alastair Campbell curtly informed the assembled hacks that they were all, including Patrick Wintour, "sneering tossers".

It's not surprising, of course, that Blair was so anxious to trumpet the first report of his social exclusion unit. The lack of any real progress in alleviating poverty is a sore point, so setting up 18 "task forces" to deal with the report's recommendations looks like action.

Apart from the bulldozing of problem areas, Blair drew attention to the task force headed by the well-groomed and Blairite junior health minister Tessa Jowell, which will look at ways of encouraging supermarket chains to open stores in deprived inner city areas.

The report highlights the fact that people on low income have to travel a long way and pay inflated prices for food. But this is not a new discovery. Back in 1996, then environment secretary John Gummer expressed concern at the trend of supermarket chains developing out-of-town sites at the expense of inner cities.

Then, Labour was keen to accuse the Tories of breaking planning guidelines aimed at keeping food retailing within urban areas. Yet Labour's attitude to out-of-town developments now seems to have changed completely as controversial sites (such as the new Sainsbury's in Richmond-upon-Thames) have repeatedly got the green light. No doubt Jowell's colleague at the DTI, "new" Labour peer and generous donor to party funds Lord Sainsbury of Turville, is relieved.

PETER MANDELSON's favourite entrepreneur must be James Palumbo, hip owner of the Ministry of Sound business who lent Mandy a Jaguar during the election campaign and now sits on various cool Britannia committees.

Palumbo's apparent backing for "new" Labour puzzles those who work at his Ministry of Sound music magazine. Palumbo's company took over sole ownership of the mag in May. Since then its ABC figures have slipped from 52,000 to 35,000. The magazine has been relaunched no fewer than three times in the past year and is now to be *reinvented* as yet another lad mag in the *FHM* mode.

Three senior staff members have been fired in the shake-up and the editor and managing editor have resigned, tired of constant change, long hours (staff were often expected to work weekends) and, worst of all, sick of their demanding head of media, one James Bethell, Palumbo's cousin.

Nepotism, poor working practices and a lack of direction? Very "new" Labour!

WELSH secretary Ron Davies has had a rough ride on his way to becoming leader of the Welsh assembly, with embarrassingly little grassroots support. But he can still count on backing from his corporate friends at Celtic Energy.

Before last year's referendum Davies appointed one Brian Riddleston, the ex-chief executive of open cast miners Celtic Energy, to the Countryside Commission for Wales. The appointment appalled local environmentalists — not least because Riddleston continued to hold shares in the energy company.

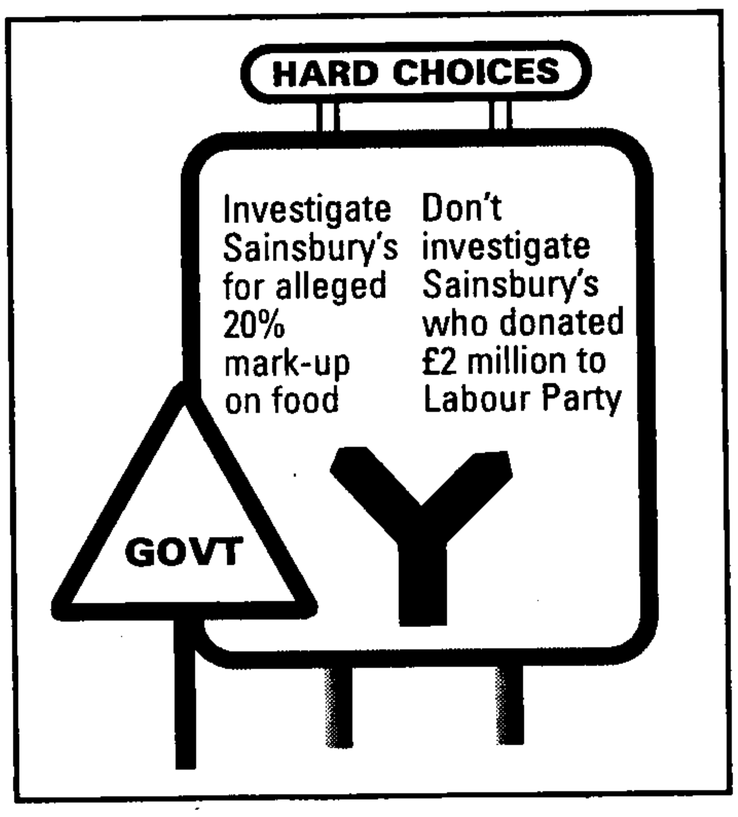
Shortly after, Ron's kind gesture was rewarded. He won a very narrow majority among the people of Wales for an assembly — his "Yes" campaign helped by a donation and secondment of staff from... Celtic Energy.

Now Davies has had dealings with the company again, agreeing that it can extend open-cast mining at Nant Helen, near Ystalyfera. The site is on the edge of the Brecon National Park and locals who will have to live with the environmental consequences had been hoping for a reprieve.

THOUGH Tony Blair and paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson cobbled together a deal to stave off pit closures, an anti-coal ethos pervades the electricity regulators, helped along by Labour's new chums at energy firm Enron, the dash-for-gas party donors.

Witness a string of press releases from the chairmen's group of the regional electricity consumers' committees, with titles like "Coal deal will cost consumers", "Coal deal left out of trade and industry report on coal", "The problem with coal and electricity generation" and "Consumer groups united against block on gas-fired generation". Such messages amount to a political attack on what is now supposed to be government policy.

In one recent anti-coal diatribe the self-styled consumers' champions claim that blocking the new gas-fired generation would cost consumers £1bn. The small print revealed the source of this headline-grabbing but hugely contentious figure... Enron, which gave £15,000 to back the Labour party conference and is one of the energy companies with most to gain from killing off the coal industry. Hardly independent evidence.


HARD CHOICES
Investigate Sainsbury's for alleged 20% mark-up on food
Don't investigate Sainsbury's who donated £2 million to Labour Party
GOVT
Y

CULTURE minister Chris Smith wants to create the libraries of the 21st century and sent junior minister Alan Howarth to remind everybody that libraries are a "vital community resource" and that they should add access to digital data to their existing role providing books.

Smith must be proud of imaginative new plans put forward in his constituency of Islington where the borough plans to develop a "specialist library and generic information service in ten major outlets" leading to "a series of beacon libraries situated down the spine of the borough".

Before the culture secretary is overcome with excitement, the *Eye* should point out that the plans actually mean closing five existing libraries and six information centres and keeping only two sites open. The council's timetable begins: "Year One: Actions 1. Library Closures". So much for a "vital community resource".

"Kids these days... they don't know they're born!"

WITH Neil Kinnock lambasting Labour leftwingers standing in elections to the NEC as "parasites and stooges" in the *Guardian*, seasoned hacks are wondering why Kinnochio, now a well paid European commissioner with responsibility for transport, should have "volunteered" such a piece, especially as he maintained a statesmanlike silence on other worldly events that would have once induced torrents of bombast.

Could it be that the prime minister will shortly have to decide whether Kinnochio should hang on to his £200,000 a year job in Brussels and that the final decision as to whether to replace him or not, barely three months away, is praying on Kinnochio's mind?

THE TORIES – REMEMBER THEM?

MICHAEL PORTILLO's new television show *Portillo's Progress* tries to reposition the former hard-right minister as a caring, centre ground Tory. But the effect is spoiled by Portillo's choice of employer.

Defeated at the last election by Labour's Stephen Twigg, Portillo now works as a consultant to the American energy giant Kerr-McGee — employer of one Karen Silkwood, who was on her way to her union with hard evidence of negligence at the company's nuclear plant in Oklahoma when she died in a car accident. A jury ordered the company to pay $10.5m compensation to the Silkwood estate, which was reversed on appeal. The company settled out of court for $1.3m.

Kerr-McGee has a disastrous environmental record. It is currently trying to clean up the spillage of its rocket fuel in Nevada which has run into local water systems and may inhibit human growth.

The company certainly keeps the US environment protection agency busy. In 1996 it paid the agency $1m and took on a $25m clean up of the Little Menomonee River in Wisconsin. The company had filled the river with creosote waste. In the same year Kerr-McGee was ordered to clean the Soda Springs Chemical Plant in Idaho. It had created two enormous waste ponds which were leaking arsenic, vanadium and molybendum into the drinking supplies of more than 3,000 people.

NOT all MPs felt that the emergency recall of parliament to discuss anti-terrorism measures in the wake of the Omagh bombing should disrupt their social life.

For example, Bernard Jenkin, Tory MP for North Essex, decided it was more important to attend a Tory fund-raising dinner in his constituency at £50-a-head in the presence of guest speaker Lord Archer.

So while most MPs were discussing counter-terrorism, Jenkin was listening to the world's greatest storyteller and would-be mayor of London telling enthralled diners that Bernard — son of Patrick Jenkin, the Thatcher minister who abolished the Greater London Council — was sure to become a star in the Hague cabinet.

'Backbiter'

FIVE TV

Trisha (ITV)

FOR the modern reader, there's always a shock in reading volumes of old letters in which the correspondents address each other by surname: "Dear Nicholson... Dear Larkin" and so on. Television titling has followed the same shift from formality to familiarity. Look in the old Radio Times and it's all Whicker and Parkinson and Wogan. These days, programmes are on first-name terms with their presenters. And nowhere is this desperate matiness more apparent than on the daytime talk-show circuit.

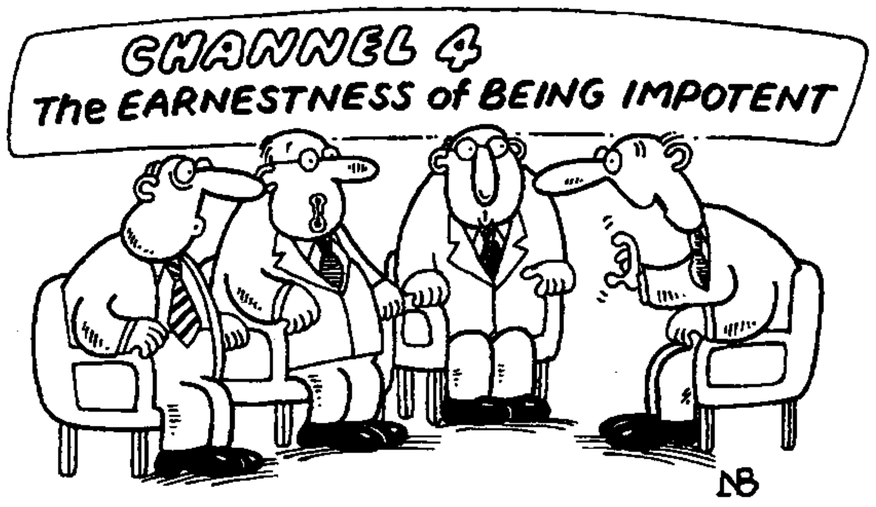
While Vanessa disappears from ITV and prepares to start on BBC1 and Esther takes a little time off BBC2 to be with her family, two more female monikers pop up in the schedule. Esther is to alternate with Lowri (Turner) and Vanessa is replaced by Trisha and Trisha (Goddard).

Whatever you thought of Vanessa, she at least represented a brave challenge to TV's idea of how a hostess should look: more Babe than babe. Trisha, however, flown in from Australian TV at short notice, is straight Asian babe fantasy material, although publicity material stresses that she is a "trained counsellor who speaks five languages".

Trisha's main tongue, though, is empathese, the dialect pioneered by Oprah. But you wonder if she's maybe not a touch too trusting. Her first English show last week was a new low in daily TV tack, during which it seemed painfully clear that the show had been the victim of a student stunt.

In the snappy captions favoured by this format, the first show was called: HE WEARS WOMEN'S CLOTHES. The audience was introduced to Molly, a Sloaney student with her nipples showing through a T-shirt, who recounted the bleak afternoon in a student hall of residence when she found Toby, her bloke, putting on her knickers. Trisha announced that we would now meet Toby. A muscular young man came down the catwalk into the studio wearing a red dress and lipstick. "Hey! You're wearing my dress!", shouted Molly.

Vanessa was shot in Norwich and it is well-known that students from the University of East Anglia used to supplement their income — in these grim days of college loans — by getting on to the show as a guest, under the guise of some bizarre invented lifestyle aspect. At one point, there was a kerfuffle because it came out that one particular pervert or scumbag on the show was an undergrad lying for his supper.



You'd think that Trisha might have been on alert. But with certain details already proving troublesome — could Toby really have got his ex-girlfriend's dress without her knowing — Toby let it slip that he was a "drama student". If that wasn't enough to hint at what was going on, a friend of Toby's suddenly stood up in the audience and announced that he couldn't keep it any longer: he and Toby had been lovers. Molly shrieked about betrayal. The emotions all sounded about as convincing as a Dram Soc fresher's production of Pinter's The Lover.

"We didn't know this was going to happen!" Trisha gasped to the audience. Well, no, love, you wouldn't. In a theatrical happening or stunt or con-trick, the victim never does know.

Trisha would have been advised to use her commonsense here but, unfortunately, she fell back on her training as a counsellor: "Toby, I think it's important to get the definitions right. You're not a transsexual. You're a cross-dresser. Most cross-dressers are not homosexuals. You seem to be an exception."

Poor Trisha. Her show is supposed to solve problems. And it looked as if she had just solved the immediate financial problems of a whole group of UEA drama students.

As the week went on, the series got no better. The problem is that people who want to appear on TV and make a bob or two have wised-up to the existence of this television market which is desperate for people who represent moral or ethical dilemmas. It's pretty obvious that there now exists a kind of music hall circuit of neuroses, on which would-be performers tour largely spurious conditions to researchers made credulous by their deadlines.

For example last Thursday's show — "You're A Naughty Nagging Nightmare!" — featured a man apparently driven mad by his partner's nagging and two sisters who couldn't stand the bossy older one. It was clear, though, that they were hamming it up for the cameras and that they would go home and live happily together until the next time they saw an ad in the papers for people who live with bad naggers.

There were headlines recently when it emerged that a Channel 4 documentary had been axed because two lovers had pretended to be an unusually close father and daughter for a programme called Daddy's Girl. Pundits asked how it could possibly happen that researchers are duped in this way. But, on daytime TV talk shows, you get the impression that it happens all the time. And nobody bothers because both producers and audience want to believe that these nuts are for real.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

WITH a flurry of no interest at all, BBC Choice "a channel for the new age" is born. BBC1 and BBC2 are joined by a totally new channel that "serves the whole audience in its full diversity" — er, by giving an audience of zero edited highlights of what's just been on BBC1 and BBC2.

Director-general John Birt thinks it's great. "We have asked our programme makers to be inventive" (ie they have even less money than ever before to make programmes) "and they have risen to the challenge wonderfully... This is a tremendous liberation for us," he says in the BBC's in-house rag, Pravdariel.

Birt has a point. BBC Choice means those Sunday league football matches not belonging to BSkyB can now overrun without heartbreak. There will be extra space for "necessary commitments to other programmes" like news bulletins, and when Birt asks for a licence fee hike next year he can claim the BBC is providing more output. So stand by for a barrage of expensive trails for BBC Choice during the Christmas TV highlights.

Thanks to the BBC's internal market the cost of, say, a Panorama can now be set against a whole hour of BBC Choice airtime as well as its original BBC1 transmission. Thus one programme budget buys two primetime airings. BBC Choice may be a viewerless void — but on the balance sheet the accountants will love it.

Take the programme First Say, described as a chance for Panorama "to breathe". An "inventive" programme team turns up at the Panorama office, borrows finished programme tapes from reluctant producers, dubs them off, edits them down and then — this is the inventive bit — films members of the public discussing the clips in the pub. And who was the "member of the public" invited to comment on recycled Panorama coverage of the crisis in the White House? "A particular coup was the appearance of Michael Cole, former BBC newsreader and Harrods press secretary, who became a public figure after the death of Diana and Dodi Fayed."

16.00 Six O'Clock News

Radio Times

BIRTSPEAK

BACKSTAGE magazine gives a fascinating "behind the scenes insight" into the crazee world of BBC Resources.

The fifth issue tells Resources workers that "62,000 bulb replacements" have been completed in the last year — and that's not all! "4,000 tap servicings" have also taken place.

Says new contracts executive Graham Creasy: "Services Group is here to create the optimum environment for our customers. In the Building Services field this is quite literally the aim, and is one practical way of transforming our aspiration to put the 'Customer First' strategy into reality".

COLD WAR
FOLLOWING A TIME OF GREAT CONFLICT...
THE STALINIST REGIME EMBARKED ON A MASSIVE SPENDING PROGRAMME...
LEAVING A WORLD LIVING IN DREAD...
PRAYING IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN
BUT THE SERIES STILL GOT MADE
YES I KNOW I'M OVER DRAWN!

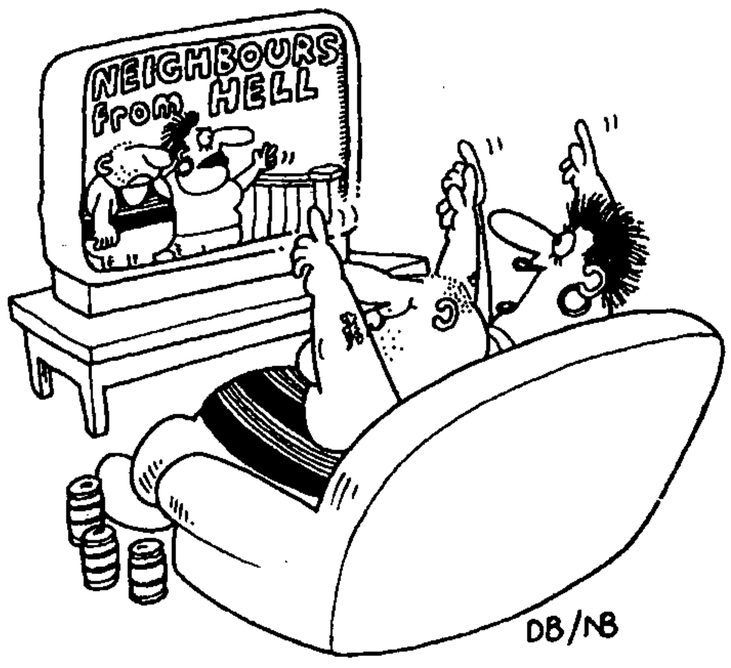
BRITAIN's raunchiest TV critic Jaci Stephen was gracing the Groucho Club's bar recently when she spotted a handsome young man. Naturally she strolled over, introduced herself to the gorgeous newcomer and asked him what he did.

Jaci's eyes lit up with delight when he revealed he was an actor. "Oh really," she replied, "I'm a TV critic. I've helped lots of people's careers, you know."

The youth looked shifty and said that was very kind but he'd been in a few things and was doing okay. "Still," continued the irrepressible Jaci, "I could probably help you, you're very good looking and you've got a sort of Euan McGregorish look about you. What's your name?"

"Er, Euan McGregor," he replied.

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Celebrity begins at home

OBN/Sky

The Sun urged Tony Blair to give Peter Mandelson a proper Cabinet job in his reshuffle. As Trade Secretary, he's proving worthy of our faith. He's blocking Ladbroke's £375 million takeover of Corals, to maintain competition for punters... He's clearly the best Mandelson for the jobs.

The Sun, on the man who is currently considering whether to allow BSkyB's takeover of Manchester United.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

CONGRATULATIONS to *Sunset Times* hack Matthew Lynn, who managed to write a 3,000-word profile-cum-interview with Matthew Freud without once mentioning the PR man's girlfriend.

This might be because the lucky (if anonymous) woman is Princess Elisabeth Murdoch, general mistress of BSkyB.

THOSE listening to DJ Chris Evans on his Virgin Radio breakfast show have been bombarded with enthusiastic chat about television show *Models Close Up*.

What a treat the show was going to be, gushed Evans, with top photographer David Bailey interviewing all the big names in fashion. Odd that Evans forgot to mention that this terrific programme is a David Bailey film made in conjunction with Ginger Productions... owned by one Chris Evans.

JUST FANCY THAT!

TORY TOURS — put the Fun back into Fund-raising for your local Conservative Association...

THE HAGUE, 19-23 October, by coach. £450.

"Exciting new addition to the portfolio... an unusual opportunity to enjoy a different aspect of Low Countries' culture in congenial company."

— Kelso Travel brochure.

LONDON CALLING

SAM YOUNGER, the mild-mannered successor to John Tusa as managing director of the BBC World Service, has become the latest senior suit to be shown the door for failing the Birt commitment test.

His replacement is the thrusting young Birtist Mark Byford, former head of regional radio, whose ignorance of Bush House is so profound he didn't even know it ran foreign-language services.

As with the recent abrupt departure of the controller of BBC Online, Ed Briffa, the corporate publicity machine issued the usual flannel about Younger leaving to "pursue other interests". When the London *Evening Standard* dared suggest that he had gone unwillingly, BBC spin doctors rang round editors insisting that there was nothing but sweetness and light between "Sir" John Birt and Younger. They added menacingly that m'learned friends would issue libel writs if words such as "sacked" or "fired" appeared in print.

How odd, then, that a devastated Younger told friends he was "ordered to leave" by the DG and refused to announce his departure himself, leaving it to his hapless deputy Caroline Thompson to deliver the official line to disbelieving staff. He then cleared his desk and was gone, despite a claim in the Corpspeak press release that he would be "leaving the BBC towards the end of the year".

The oddest thing of all is that Younger had in fact pushed through Birt's restructuring proposals — which, though hugely unpopular with staff, were judged a success by BBC governors and foreign office mandarins. But mere obedience is no longer enough. Younger had, apparently, failed to show "the right kind of enthusiasm" for the changes, and so the Chief Dalek issued his familiar command: "Exterminate, exterminate..."

ONE of the most awkward items in the in-tray of the new head of BBC World Service is a festering dispute with Alan Pearce, a former correspondent in Afghanistan.

Pearce was the only BBC hack on the spot during the fall of Kabul, which was singled out in the corporation's 1996 annual report as one of the journalistic highlights of the year. What the report neglected to add was that Pearce -- who nearly died in the course of his duties -- was effectively dumped immediately afterwards. Other BBC journalists in war-zones are watching the row with close interest, since his complaints about the suits at Bush House echo their own experiences.

Pearce's troubles began almost as soon as he arrived in Kabul at the end of 1995. His line manager in London, Nick Nugent, would allow him only one spare battery for his laptop, even though there was no mains electricity in the country. Nugent helpfully advised him to "use a notebook and pencil instead". When Pearce complained that his satellite-phone was so cheap and shoddy that he couldn't send "broadcast quality" recordings, he was told the BBC couldn't afford anything better -- though his successor Alan Johnston was given a state-of-the-art mobile phone plus a big desk-top model.

Pearce kept warning that his expenses were about to run out because of the siege, but Nugent took no notice. When his cash was duly exhausted, Nugent ticked him off for "complaining constantly about lack of money". Faxes to the BBC's health and safety division, pleading for body armour, went unanswered.

But the greatest threat to life and limb came from the Persian and Pushtu services in London, which continually altered the sense of Pearce's reports in translation. On 27 September 1996, several hours after he began reporting the Taliban's final assault on Kabul, the Persian service was still running his early-morning despatch in which he said that the city was quiet — to which the Persians added a line of their own that "the Taliban will never succeed in capturing the capital".

A day or two later, crossing the frontline to interview the defeated forces, Pearce was accosted by a soldier of the ousted government who shoved an AK47 in his face and drew back the bolt, screaming abuse at the BBC coverage. When Pearce mentioned this to a manager in London, she told him "not to take these things too seriously" -- apparently forgetting that a local BBC stringer, Mirwais Jalil, had been murdered a year or two earlier when he was pulled out of his car and pumped with 28 bullets.

"The effect of all this,"" Pearce noted in a memo, "was to make me feel very isolated in a very dangerous place. I felt that I had to watch my back more than my front: that the Persians were deliberately trying to put me in danger, and that my managers had no concept of the dangers and difficulties under which I laboured." During the next few days several journalists were ordered out of their vehicles by Taliban troops and asked if they were Alan Pearce of the BBC -- "because if you were, we would hang you". Soon afterwards Pearce himself was dragged out of a Land Rover, beaten with rifle-butts and nearly strangled with his own scarf by a Taliban mullah angry at the Persian output.

None of the BBC managers inquired about Pearce's injuries -- and none called or visited when he came to London for hospital treatment, which he had to arrange himself. At the end of his sick leave, Pearce was suddenly informed that he could not go back to Afghanistan unless he was prepared to say that he had no problems with management. As he had nothing but problems, he couldn't comply -- and, since his girlfriend would have been left alone in Kabul if he didn't return, he had to resign from the BBC to travel back.

Pearce has been unable to work for the past two years. Because of the Taliban beating he still suffers from constant neck pain, locked muscles, numb arms, a slipped disc and crushed vertebrae. But in that time he has had no support or compensation from his caring ex-employers. His GP has also diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder. Another legacy of the Taliban? Er, not entirely: the doctor attributes it to his appalling treatment by managers at the BBC.

Diana balls

"PRINCE William's and Prince Harry's 'touching personal statement' to the nation calling for an end to public mourning for the Princess of Wales aroused my anger. I deeply resent being addressed upon such a deeply felt matter by two very young people. The millions of words that have been written and read over the past 12 months attest to the fact that a vast number of people are still trying to define Diana, to understand what our relationship with her was all about... Would the Princess have encouraged her sons to put their feelings above those of others?"

— Letter in *Daily Mail* (submitted by S.L. Baines).

ACTOR Colin Firth **(left)** is 38 today; golfer Arnold Palmer **(right)** is 69.

Lancashire Evening Post

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on hype

PROOF that new investment has not taken off under privatisation is the increasing amount of routine expenditure presented to the public as "upgrading".

Railtrack pioneered the con with network management statements: glossy documents intended to show how the network would be upgraded. In the almost total absence of investment commitments, the statements are padded out with descriptions of projects which essentially amount to routine renewal of track, signals and other infrastructure.

Pulling the wool over people's eyes is now the foundation of Railtrack policy. Almost all its daily expenditure goes on renewal and maintenance, such as repainting stations. Even the planned upgrade of the west coast route is driven by the need to replace clapped-out track, signals and electrical equipment. The hype surrounding renewal masks the almost total inaction on problems that need real investment: such as extra capacity at bottlenecks, flyovers at busy junctions and methods to accommodate growing freight traffic.

The office of passenger rail franchising (Opraf) even mirrors Railtrack. It recently announced that it would compel Chiltern Railways to spend £2.5m on passenger benefits as compensation for abysmal performance. Some elements *will* benefit passengers, such as a week's free travel for season ticket holders; but Opraf includes work that would be needed anyway: refurbishment of station toilets, recruitment of extra drivers and modifying trains to improve reliability.

Passengers on North Western Trains can look forward to similar fudge as passenger benefits worth £1.2m are promised as part of FirstGroup's takeover. FirstGroup has also promised to refurbish sprinter trains — which need revamping anyway.

Train refurbishment was one of Opraf's biggest cons when it let the franchises. The insides of trains begin to look jaded after only a few years, so it was natural that franchise holders would refurbish them during their terms of seven years or more (as BR would have done). In some cases shiny paint and plush new seats can help disguise the age or sub-standard design of a train. These realities didn't stop Opraf from trumpeting refurbishments as major investment commitments.

The practice of dressing routine spending as significant upgrades has worrying implications. It could encourage managers to keep quiet about, and even defer, plans for basic projects like refurbishing toilets or coordinating with buses in case their companies are ever required to commit to extra "passenger benefits". Railtrack might not be forced to invest greater sums if it can convince observers that painting stations counts as investment.

There are two explanations for Opraf's portrayal of run-of-the-mill spending as upgrading. One is that Opraf knows what the train companies are up to and is happy to help them to con the public. The other is that Opraf is fooled by some of the commitments offered by the franchisees, many of whom have been invited to bid to extend their franchises. If Opraf can't make the distinction when it reviews the bids, many franchises could be set in stone until 2010 with improvements amounting to little more than new urinals and fresh fabric on the train seats.

'Dr B. Ching'

DOING THE ROUNDS

THE Eye's exposure of variable success rates for surgery in infants with biliary atresia (the Kasai operation, Eyes 957, 958) has provoked some interesting responses.

M.D.'s declaration is that, in view of the evidence that centres doing five or more of the operations each get far better results than the "one a year" centres (62 percent success versus 17 percent), the service should be centralised at a few centres.

This view was endorsed by Leeds surgeon Mark Stringer ("We need to prevent surgeons carrying out this operation on rare occasions"); and then by David Burge, honorary secretary of British Association of Paediatric Surgeons (BAPS), in a letter to the Eye in August: "Our association has agreed to coordinate centralisation of surgery for biliary atresia to six major centres in the British Isles." This is 13 years after a paper by BAPS members in the British Medical Journal recommended the same strategy. It's welcome... but don't hold your breath.

However, a contrary view on the impossibility of passing statistical judgement on surgeons who carry out operations, however complex, on very rare occasions comes from surgeon Andrew J. McIrvine. "You have fallen into the fallacy that large numbers are a necessity for excellence. The statistical fact is that you cannot interpret the results from the centres with low numbers. In simple terms a one-a-year centre can only have either 100 percent success or 100 percent failure. Putting all these centres together and giving a figure of 17 percent is simply unfair."

Mr McIrvine says this holds true for other surgical procedures and that "carotid endarterectomy (scooping out muck in the carotid artery to prevent a stroke) should be another one ripe for investigation and audit. The Vascular Surgical Society did such an audit but was unable to relate frequency of operation to success rate. Although you quote one paper there is very little evidence of this linkage. The data to support super specialisation is very thin, it may be that really extreme specialisation makes you more dangerous again as you cannot deal with anything outside your very narrow field. As we have relatively few surgeons in this country we just cannot afford to be so specialised.

"As an individual surgeon it is even more difficult. Say when you start your consultant career you have a series of bad results: how do you know whether it is you or just statistical bad luck? The overall stroke rate associated with carotid surgery is usually quoted at 4 percent. If this was your first four cases it could be surgical incompetence, if it was the last four of 100 it would just be regarded as luck, but in both series it could be down to chance. Lord Brock is famously quoted as killing his first 10 mitral valvotomies. Numerous other operations started with high failure rates. For how long are surgeons meant to hold their nerve while attempting new procedures and developments?

"It must have taken considerable nerve to try the Kasai operation at all. It does not make logical sense just to stitch a bit of bowel to a liver with no bile ducts and hope it will drain — but it does work, even up to 62 percent of the time in the best hands. You can be sure the early results were not this good. It is very easy to knock those surgeons with poor results, but... If we witch-hunt all surgeons to have figures only as good as 'the best' the result will be that the majority of surgeons will just stop doing any risky surgery."

This is all fascinating stuff, but what is the answer? Statistical proof of any surgical team's competence or otherwise is notoriously difficult to prove. A lot of surgery is about making a judgement without statistical proof. But if M.D. had to choose between a high or a low volume centre, I'd go high every time.

● IN 1992 a paediatric cardiac surgery was set up in Cardiff. The official reason was because South Wales deserved to have its own unit, but there is little doubt the Welsh office had been made aware of problems in Bristol, to where children were then being referred.

A lot of effort was made in recruiting good staff to Cardiff and when the unit opened, referrals from South Wales to Bristol dried up. Ironically the Cardiff unit is now having problems after two consultants resigned. Surgeon Francesco Musemeci has returned to Italy and delivered a broadside about lack of resources. "More surgeons, more equipment and a special intensive care unit for children are needed." The other surgeon to quit is Richard Stuart, who is moving to the Bristol unit (now one of the best in the country). As a result, up to 30 babies are being transferred from Cardiff to Birmingham for their heart surgery

M.D.

Down on the Funny Farm

MONSANTO, the Frankenstein food people, are getting a lot of attention with their vacuous advertising campaign for genetically modified plants. But the company will soon get much more attention thanks to the following amusingly doctored "advertisement" which has mysteriously started doing the rounds.

MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES. YET.

Although we're working on it. In the meantime, we've had to settle for adding scorpion genes to potatoes, and fish genes to tomatoes. It takes longer, but in the end the results are the same. Because these exciting new foods have a unique advantage over standard, traditional foods.

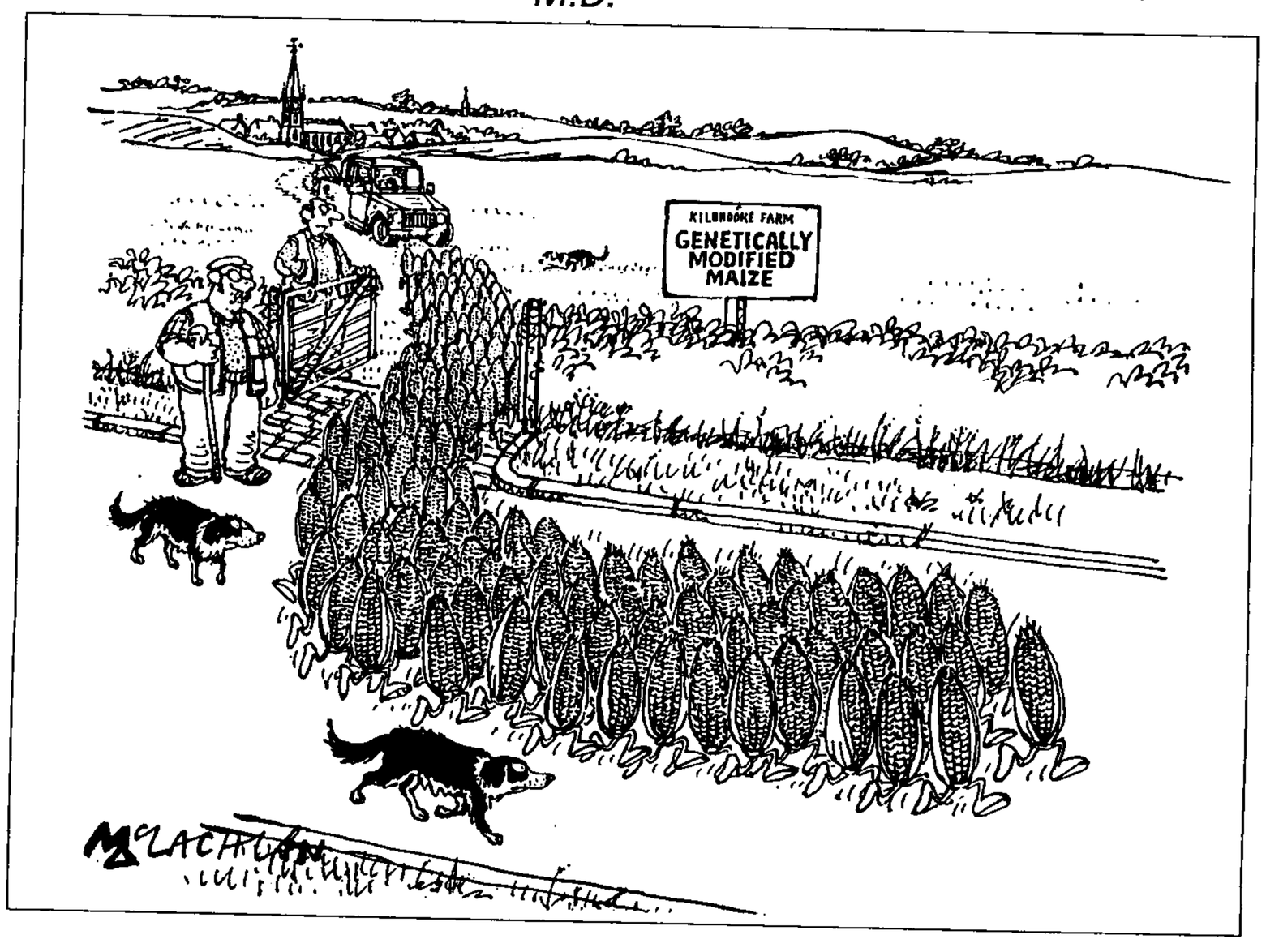
They can be patented. By us.

And, in the best humanitarian traditions of a caring company, we're developing a terminator gene which means that crops will become sterile after a year, and unable to produce seeds. So the farmer will have to pay us all over again! Are we smart or what?

With these exciting new crops, we may not have the solution to world hunger — but we'll sure as hell sort out poverty. Ours, that is. Because no matter who plants a genetic crop, and no matter where it is grown — we'll be the ones who rake it in.

MonSatan
Food. Stealth. Hype

'Even Newer Muckspreader'



Rotten Boroughs

Lambeth & Southwark

PRIVATE firms who took over the running of housing benefit (HB) and council tax systems in three south London boroughs have bitten off more than they can chew. The sacking of computer company EDS by Wandsworth council could soon be followed by Lambeth's dumping of Capita and Southwark's sacking of CSL.

In Lambeth, where Capita has run HB and council tax since last December, an outside consultant is being brought in to try to sort out the chaos. Capita's inability to process HB claims quickly enough has resulted in the council threatening tenants (including elderly ones in sheltered accommodation) with eviction for rent *arrears* which have been caused solely by Capita's pisspoor performance.

Another Capita "improvement" is the huge increase in rent owed by tenants, £40m, partly due to delayed benefit payments. Front line housing officers are having to calm the irate tenants who are threatened with eviction. So this is not perhaps the moment for housing chair Tom Franklin to test Lambeth's new image by removing the screens that protect staff.

In the main HB office at Olive Morris House post was recently left unopened for three weeks, staff having been warned not to discuss problems by Capita. In the council tax section, also run by Capita, Lambeth has maintained its proud record of having the worst collection rate in the country.

In Southwark, meanwhile, CSL is doing little better. Six months ago the firm boasted that HB claims would be processed within a week of receipt. Six months later, it has a staggering backlog of 40,000 unprocessed claims and renewals. As in Lambeth, advice centres have been inundated with private and public claimants facing the threat of eviction because their HB claims have not been processed.

In desperation CSL has bused staff in from Somerset, with attendant costs involved including expensive hotel bills. And whether Lambeth is right to spend yet more on consultant Austin Mayhead Ltd to sort out the mess is a moot point. Previously the firm was employed by Southwark to advise on the running of, er, housing benefit.

Spend, spend, spend...

MORE on Shaun "The Credit Card Kid" Stringer, leader of Vale of Glamorgan council, whose spending with the council's flexible friend has Dai Knacker investigating.

Stringer recently tried to turn the spotlight on others on the council, requesting details of all foreign travel and hospitality from the director of finance. This revealed a few "twinning trips" by the chief executive and chairman, two meagre knees-ups for retiring environmental services officers, trips by the planning department, buffets for new teachers by the education department and other harmlessly predictable outgoings.

But the finance director's letter to Stringer ended on a more interesting note. "In the interests of completeness I must record your visit to Geneva to attend a draw of a European football competition in which Barry Town AFC were involved," it said. "You were accompanied by the Chief Executive and the cost was £1,349.64. No committee approval exists for this visit."

Leeds

CARING, sharing Leeds city council — so cash strapped it is closing four old people's homes (*Eye* 956) — has diverted £250,000 from its services for a millennium party. Elderly residents who lose their homes and are still alive by then will no doubt be thrilled.

North-east Special

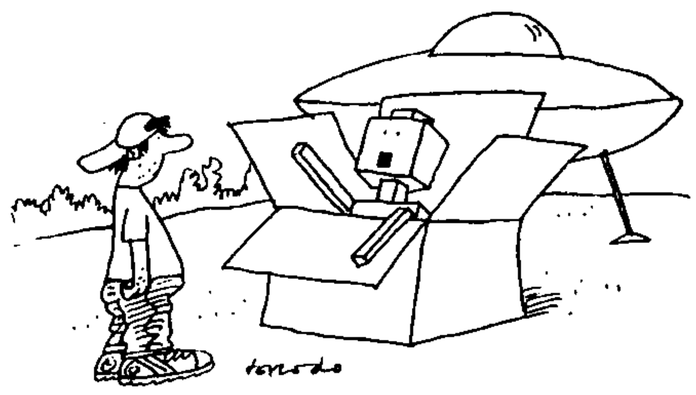
JOB losses have hit the north-east hard — but at least the area's town halls aren't feeling the pinch...

Durham: According to county council chairman Maurice Nicholls, Tony Blair wants councillors' allowances to "reinforce the culture of modern local government". Which must be why the Labour authority has pushed through hefty pay rises for members along with increases in weekly and daily attendance allowances for all.

Leader Don Robson, who has moaned publicly about the *Eye*'s harassment of hard-working politicians, has had his special responsibility allowance increased from under £1,200 to £10,000 a year. His deputy Bob Pendlebury has had his handout upped from £885 to £5,000 a year. Neither councillor, both of whom are usually quick to complain about "greedy bastard" fat-cat company directors, has said anything about the rises.

Middlesbrough: There is no shortage of money for good Labour folk in miserable Middlesbrough either. Councillors recently awarded themselves inflation-busting increases in attendance allowances, and appointed a new managing director, John Foster, at £80,000 a year. Foster's first job was to announce 150 compulsory redundancies, ignoring pleas from the unions for consultation.

One man unfazed by the strife is council leader Ken Walker, who recently married in the town hall. When Walker discovered that he had no money to pay the band or disco, he borrowed £600 from the till behind the bar. With so many weighty matters on his mind Walker then somehow forgot to repay this until the day his local paper asked him about the missing money.



"I come from the planet Ikea"

Wandsworth

AT the recent opening of swanky wine bar Parisa on Putney High Street, Tory councillor and Wandsworth mayor Prof Elizabeth Howlett — free champagne in hand — accepted a £300 cheque from Parisa's owner for a local children's charity.

All very nice... Especially when just around the corner 87 social workers and their colleagues, who work with children at risk of abuse, were protesting about being made redundant in order to keep Wandsworth's notorious council tax the lowest in Britain.

Foster carers and parents hit by the £2.6m cut in the social services budget say an extra £2 a month on council tax bills would ensure services remain intact. "As you know," Mayor Howlett told the crowd at Parisa, "Wandsworth council do everything in their power to help needy children in Wandsworth."

Glasgow

NOT only is Glasgow lord provost Pat "Tin Pan" Lally still in office despite countless allegations of (and inquiries into) junketing, cronyism and votes-for-trips, he is continuing to freeload with impunity.

Lally's latest lig was an all-expenses-paid trip to the Edinburgh tattoo accompanied by 21 guests. It was a similar trip last year that attracted much rancour from taxpaying Scots, but that didn't bother Lally who arrived in Edinburgh in a council-paid limo. Afterwards he treated everyone to a slap-up feast at the Carlton Highland Hotel.

Pseuds Corner

This is a garment that one can retreat into. It signifies a need to embark on a journey in order to discover inner sanctuary. What we are seeing now is fashion's ultimate security blanket. A skirt to feel snug in and protected by, when other elements of modern life seem slightly too unreliable. This skirt is saying "Stay in, light a fire and read a self-help book. We need to find the earth mother in ourselves and we will do it together."

LUELLA BARTLEY
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

The transformation of English football in the 1990s has involved a similar application of free-market and strong statist principles. Indeed, it stands out as a paradigmatic example of a moribund Keynesian industry rejuvenated by the hard-headed application of neo-liberal principles.

ANTHONY KING
Independent

The artist [Mona Hatoum], whose earlier works have included appearing naked in a box smeared with clay, said that she had collected her pubic hair for years, gathering it up from baths, plugholes and floors and storing it in shoeboxes under her bed. She always knew it would come in useful, she said, recalling how inspiration came to her: "I was staying with someone, and was playing absentmindedly with the hair, rolling it in my hand. Hairballs happened. It looked very beautiful. It was empty in the middle and I was thinking of hair and air balls."

The Times

I started making up a list of people to thank but it got too long — you know who you are. Eternal gratitude to everyone who's supported the stuff I've done (with their hard-earned cash or through shoplifting) and who can see through all the bullshit, both positive and negative, that tends to surround this sort of thing.

Ta.

IRVINE WALSH
Introduction to *Filth*

When a generous host really gives, it's nice to think they get something back, and for Alice Bamford's 21st birthday party given by her mother, Lady Bamford, everyone, but everyone, looked stunning. The theme was *The Great Gatsby*, with carmine lips, black eyes, cigarette holders, feathers, sequins and cocktail hats. 'We should wear them more often,' cried the girls, and the men agreed. It was sex on a swizzle-stick, but of the 'don't touch' variety. Cigarette girls served Sobranies; pink champagne cascaded over pyramids of glasses; and five different types of cocktail were on offer. Sir Anthony Bamford's vintage cars stood at the entrance, chauffeurs in jodhpurs and boots valet-parked. Confrey Phillips played, and a burst of fireworks heralded dinner. Guests walked through a passage lined with a photographic retrospective of Alice's wonderful life into a marquee festooned with flowers... Over her torchlit cake, Alice thanked her parents, saying: 'Mummy and Daddy, I love you so much. The stork certainly dropped me off at the right house.'

Tatler

CONTRIBUTORS: M.A. Barratt, Simon Atkinson, Ronald H. LeVell, Gavin Alcott, Nettie Firman.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

O'Dwyer? Oh dear...

Sir,

It has come to my attention that a Dr Eamonn O'Dwyer has been writing to you on the subject of meat-and-bonemeal and BSE, claiming to be a consultant to the European Commission.

The European Commission has no consultants engaged on this subject. I am the head of section responsible for BSE legislation and I have never heard of Dr O'Dwyer. He may be preparing a draft directive on the subject, but if so it is not for the commission. I can assure you that the commission services are well aware of the history of the use of meat-and-bone meal, dating back to the last century, and that our fine library service is quite capable of retrieving published references on the subject.

By the way, Even Newer Muckspreader (EYE *959) is wrong — there is evidence* (VETERINARY RECORD, *1 June 1996, pp. 546 - 548) that when sheep are fed (not injected) with brain from BSE-infected cattle, they develop BSE. This was the reason for the commission to include certain sheep offals in our proposed ban on specified risk materials.*

Yours,
ANDREW J. WILSON,

European Commission, Brussels.

● ***Er... yes... we've been had. Dr O'Dwyer does not appear to exist. Egg on face time. Ed.***

Left-handed compliment

Sir,

You learn something new every day and until I saw the cover of EYE *959 I had not realised that Bill Clinton is left-handed.*

Yours faithfully,
HUW ROBERTS,

Caerdydd, Wales.

Lookalike

Jeanne

Gaynor

Sir,

I came across this portrait of Robin Cook's new love, Gaynor Regan, on a visit to an art gallery. The sign said it was Jeanne Hébuterne by Amedeo Modigliani. Shurely shome mishtake?

Yours,
ENA B PASTOR.

Mean time?

Sir,

Whilst often entertained by the ramblings in PRIVATE EYE, *they do irritate me when they comment erroneously on matters on which I have some knowledge. Nooks & Corners in issue 956 ranted on about the status and style of the future tenant for the Royal Naval College. Whilst I am aware that the author, Piloti, is rather better informed in fact than is displayed via the column,* EYE *should not be allowed to get away entirely scot free.*

The "so-called" University of Greenwich had its title confirmed by the Privy Council and it WAS NOT previously "South East London Polytechnic". Woolwich Polytechnic was founded by Quintin Hogg in 1890 and the university is proud to be able to claim to be directly descended from the second oldest polytechnic.

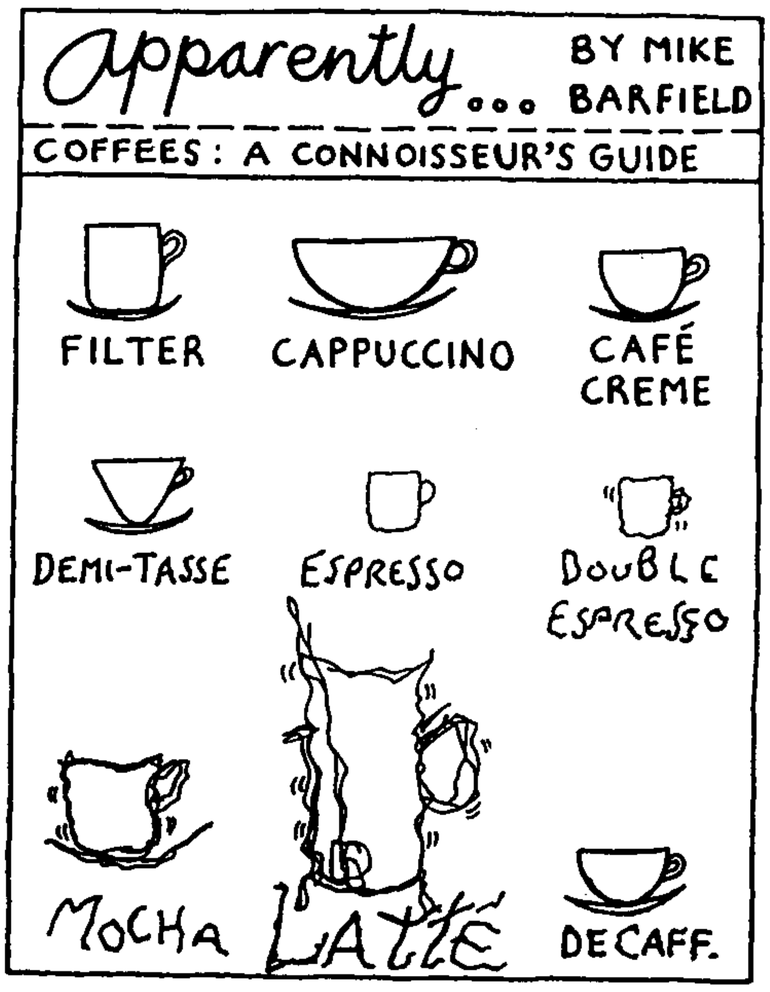
Contrary to the assertions in the article, our staff and students are fully behind our decision to occupy the Royal Naval College — a proposal that has been considered and ratified by government and other professional advisers.

Not only have we NOT "ripped panelling" out of our buildings but we actively support the largest single collection of architectural items in the United Kingdom (collected by Charles Brooking over some 30 years). We have, however, rescued parts of our buildings from members of the public who have attempted to steal them and in some cases replicas have been made with the originals going into the Brooking Collection.

Finally, the Nurses Home at Greenwich never was part of the Royal Naval College and, if I can remind Piloti, the present day Greenwich was built as an old folks' home which at its peak housed some 3,000 retired sailors. By all accounts it was a lively, colourful and noisy place. Having been a place of learning for the past 120 years, I would like to think that, following occupation by the University, and with the grounds open to the public, its new life will be an easy blend of the first two.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN McWILLIAM,

The University of Greenwich.



Hungry for change

Sir,

Muckspreader makes the unqualified claim that the animal rights lobby are "well-represented in the Consumers' Association" (EYE *959): who are these people and which organisations do they represent?*

*It has been my experience that voices expressing the widespread public revulsion over cruelty to animals — in farming or elsewhere — are seriously **under**-represented on government committees and I am heartened to read that the situation is beginning to improve.*

Your various recent correspondents on the "meat-and-bonemeal" debate seek to obscure the subject by nit-picking about publication dates: any citations from texts pre-dating the postwar boom in factory farming are irrelevant, since it is intensive farming that has created the problem of what to do with surplus meat and animal waste. Before modern consumerism meat was not eaten on a daily basis by most of the population, let alone farm animals: today however meat is fed regularly to millions of herbivores in combination with a cocktail of antibiotics and growth hormones. The outcome of this 40-year experiment is daily more evident, and I am not sure that a stupid idea, be it suggested in 1892 or 1941, becomes the less stupid once put into widespread practice

Yours sincerely,
S. STRANKS,

Smethwick, W. Midlands.

LUVVIES

"I think it is possible I may not be seen on the London stage again. I've made a vow never to work in a theatre which forces me to betray the soul of acting."

SIR IAN McKELLEN
Independent

"Do you know what it's like to make a movie? It's like a war, it's hard, like a horror movie. It's the worst pain in the world."

VINCENT GALLO, Director
Time Out

Breast is best

Sir,

Much though I applaud MD's concern for newborn babies with biliary atresia (EYE *957 and 958), I was just a little concerned about a remark made in passing: that one form of jaundice in newborns is caused by breastfeeding. While this may be true, it should be emphasised that jaundice in newborns is very common and usually passes off quickly without longterm ill effects.*

The medical advice to breastfeeding mothers whose baby is being treated for jaundice is to keep feeding. The condition of the very tiny minority of babies who need an operation is not caused by breastfeeding, which remains the best start in life any baby can have. Breastmilk contains antibodies against disease, does not contain cows' milk or nuts and is served on demand at the right temperature, does not cause constipation and, funnily enough, does not generate any profits at all for large companies.

Yours faithfully,
RUTH HOLT.

Glowing Bubbles

Sir,

I noticed (Hackwatch, 959) that you were sticking up for the late "Bubbles" Rothermere in your piece about her dead husband, Vere. "Ah, the poor little victim," I thought. On the other hand, could this possibly be any relation to the "Bubbles" Rothermere you relentlessly pilloried, mocked and did your best to humiliate for years in your ever-swelling organ, without ever explaining what she'd done to you to deserve it? You note her death from overdose "a few months" after hubby refused to pay for her new year party. But then again, what had you printed in the intervening period that might have upset her? Do you care? Doubt it. Glad to see you're keeping up the campaign against hypocrisy in the press, though.

Cheers,
CHARLIE ROSE,

Via e-mail.

■ Personal Approval Rating of "president in crisis" Bill Clinton amongst American voters

Number crunching

60%

■ Personal Approval Rating of "most popular PM ever" Tony Blair amongst British voters

I-SPY *Boston, USA*

Submitted by Laurence Cohen. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Ambrose-ia

Sir,

I was amused at your catty comments about Ambrose Evans-Pritchard in the last EYE. *In fact he has carried out the sort of ruthless in depth investigation into the Clintons which one usually looks to find in the* EYE, *and as a result* TELEGRAPH *readers know of aspects such as Troopergate, the suspicious deaths, Travelgate, Whitewater, "Nose like a hoover", etc, of which the US public is only beginning to become aware.*

Could it be professional jealousy?!

The White House's specific attacks on him and the TELEGRAPH *— as a tabloid newspaper! — strongly indicate that he has touched some raw nerves. I have not heard of them mentioning the* EYE*!*

Yours,
JOHN WHEELER,

Gerrards Cross, Bucks.

Lookalike

Lewinsky

Wyatt

Sir,

I couldn't help noticing the resemblance between Monica Lewinsky, the Oval Office's oral assistant and Petronella Wyatt, the Spectator's right-wing orator and columnist.

Yours,
ENA B SHANNON.

O·B·N

Charm is one of the characteristics of Nigel Havers, too; so much so that he once played a character called The Charmer. This week, I met him in the This Morning studios, and I must say he is utterly, utterly, delightful. Not to mention handsome, charismatic and very funny.

JACI STEPHEN
Daily Mail

"HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK: William Hague on Tuesday's This Morning. Why do people make fun of him so? He's very bright, very quick and altogether hilarious. Or is it just me?"

JACI STEPHEN
Daily Mail

Ballot paper

Sir,

It is an unpleasant duty but it must be done. I refer of course to the need to defend the EYE *against the outrageous attack of Steve Donnelly (Letters 959). Mr Donnelly strangely fails to mention that he is a [new] Labour councillor in Ealing and one presumes that his epistle will see a small rise in his stock at Millbank.*

Meanwhile others may care to speculate just how "secret" a ballot is that allows telephone voting and leaking by spindoctors unknown of the results of the poll several weeks before the actual closure of polling.

Regards,
KEITH FLETT,

London N17.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"That was an impressive run by the two English runners — one running for England and the other for Wales."
DAVID COLEMAN, BBC
(Gerald Hudson)

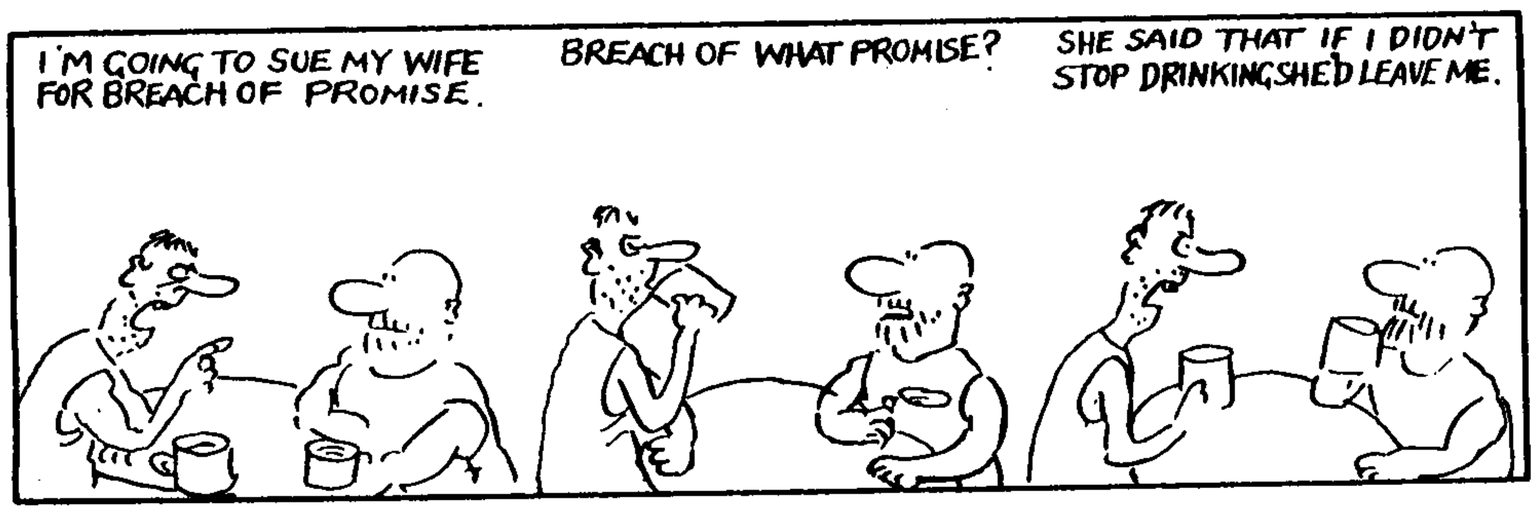
"And there is the brand new Commonwealth Champion — Diane Modahl, successfully defending her title."
DAVID COLEMAN, BBC
(Sally Blackmore)

"Boldon, keeping low as he always does, just like an aeroplane taking off."
DAVID COLEMAN, BBC
(Martin Kennedy)

"There's a little bit of Bill Clinton inside all of us..."
Editor, Sikh Messenger
(E. Owens)

"He's a man who on the one hand is a sinner and on the other hand he's repentant, and on the other hand he's on the attack."
SUZANNE MOORE (on Bill Clinton), BBC2
(John Davies)

HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN



LETTER FROM THE FOREIGN OFFICE

FOREIGN secretary Robin Cook is hoping that plaudits for the Rushdie deal will deflect attention from yet another suspicious piece of incompetence by his officials.

With Britain already under fire from angry European Union (EU) partners for using a legal technicality to put off a flight ban on Yugoslav airlines for 12 months, our boys at the foreign office (FO) circulated a paper in Brussels suggesting that sanctions could not be imposed on the Serb regime because the atrocities committed by its forces in Kosovo did not directly harm any EU states. Widespread unhappiness abroad about Britain's timid attitude to Belgrade ensured that the document was quickly leaked to the press, showing quite how far up Slobodan Milosevic's backside some of our side still seem to be.

Inside the FO fingers are already being pointed at the South East Adriatic department, but the permanent representation to the EU in Brussels must take some of the blame for this latest cock-up by allegedly professional diplomats. "You don't put suggestions like that on paper. You raise them over the phone or in discreet conversations. This incident showed a shocking lack of professionalism. Some people here seem far removed from reality," confessed one FO insider.

But are the guilty parties merely incompetent or determined to make more trouble for their boss? Cook was forced to mount another damage limitation exercise, ordering a rethink on sanctions and announcing that Belgrade had "morally forfeited" the right to the 12-month flight ban delay, which poses all kinds of awkward legal questions in itself and is likely to result in a lawsuit from the Serbs.

POOR "Cock" Robin Cook is in despair over the Commons foreign affairs committee. Just when he thought he had finally fobbed off awkward questions about government cooperation with mercenaries in the Sierra Leone Sandline affair, the committee says it won't let go.

Earlier in the year Norman Godman, the mild, ultra-loyal chairman of the committee, persuaded his colleagues not to ask too many questions about Sandline until the Legg report was published. Now the report is out and the more unruly MPs are not happy. They are demanding their right to ask the questions they suppressed at Godman's bidding. Godman has agreed and, to Cook's distress, the committee will reopen its Sandline hearings in the new session.

FURTHER evidence of the vacuousness of "new" Labour thinking can be seen in the wafer-thin consultation document produced by Panel 2000, the 32 members of the great and good who pondered over Robin Cook's coffee and biscuits on how Britain could promote a more modern image.

The result of this intensive brainstorming was a few pages of waffle about "values", "perceptions" and "providing a link between the past and the future" — the latter spawning some really dreadful posters like the George Stubbs / Damien Hirst cow one.

Another idea is to use existing poll data to see what foreigners think of us; and another is to "hold a conference every two years to discuss perceptions of Britain, and develop best practice". In fact this is all a smokescreen for the need to save money: the foreign office's budget fell by 14 percent between 1992 and 1998.

The document suggests "creating shop windows" in foreign capitals by cramming the embassy, British Council and British Tourist Authority into one building, and admits this would cut costs. It also says "we should look at the possibilities offered by touring exhibitions (and) private sector sponsorship" — in other words taking advantage of space which someone else has already paid for.

Smoothie junior foreign minister Derek Fatchett, stuck with the task of trying to make all this fly, referred hacks to a "successful" 1997 campaign to boost Britain's image in Australia. When pressed for details, however, he admitted that "I can't quote the figure" and "it is difficult to come up with concrete measurements for these things".

FUNNY OLD WORLD

● California Courts of Appeal. Cite as 98 C.D.O.S. 6601. The People v. Gavin, T.

Appellant Gavin T. contends there was insufficient evidence that he committed an assault by means of force likely to cause great bodily injury, or with a deadly weapon.

I. Facts and Procedural History. The appellant was 15, and a student at school. He was eating lunch outside with some friends during the lunch period. Appellant and a friend shared an apple. When the apple was half-eaten, appellant threw the remainder of the apple core towards the wall of a classroom, some distance away. Unfortunately, a teacher was, in fact, inside the classroom, holding a special rehearsal of 'Nymphs and Shepherds' with the school choir. The thrown apple somehow sailed through a slowly closing door, entering through a gap of about 12 inches and, after hitting a hat stand, rebounded and struck the teacher in the head. As a very unfortunate consequence, the teacher was knocked to the floor and lost consciousness. He has subsequently suffered total memory loss.

A petition was filed in the juvenile court, alleging that appellant committed an assault. The juvenile court found that the appellant did not intend to hit the teacher with the thrown apple, and merely intended to see the apple splatter against a wall. But in order to send a message to the appellant's classmates that his actions were wrong, the juvenile court nonetheless inexplicably found true the petition's allegations.

II. Discussion. We must vacate the juvenile court's order. It suffers from a number of fatal defects. Firstly, it is black letter law that one cannot unintentionally commit the crime of assault... The act of throwing a half-eaten apple against a wall, though perhaps negligent or reckless, is not such a heinous act. A half-eaten apple is not a deadly weapon, nor is it inherently dangerous to human life. A recklessly discarded apple *is not* "any means of force likely to produce great bodily injury" within the meaning of section 245, subdivision (a)(1)... Having found appellant had no intent to commit an assault, the juvenile court was required by law to find the criminal assault allegation not to be true.

III. Disposition. The matter is remanded to the juvenile court... with instructions to find the assault allegation untrue and to dismiss the petition. *(California Courts of Appeal, Daily Opinion Service, 26 August 1998. Spotter: Mark Dunning)*

—●—

● *"It was my grandmother's dying wish that her ashes should be scattered on the hills overlooking her house," Michael Anthony Horne told reporters after filing suit against the City of San Antonio, "So the day after her cremation, I drove out of town on the highway, looking for a suitable place to empty her urn. I stopped at the side of the road, and got out to find a quiet spot. Next thing I knew, a police officer drove up, pulled out a gun, asked what was in the urn, and accused me of carrying drugs.*

"He licked a finger, dipped it into my grandmother's ashes, tasted it, and said 'it's heroin.' Then he carried out a field test on some more of the ashes, and said they'd turned up positive for methamphetamines. I

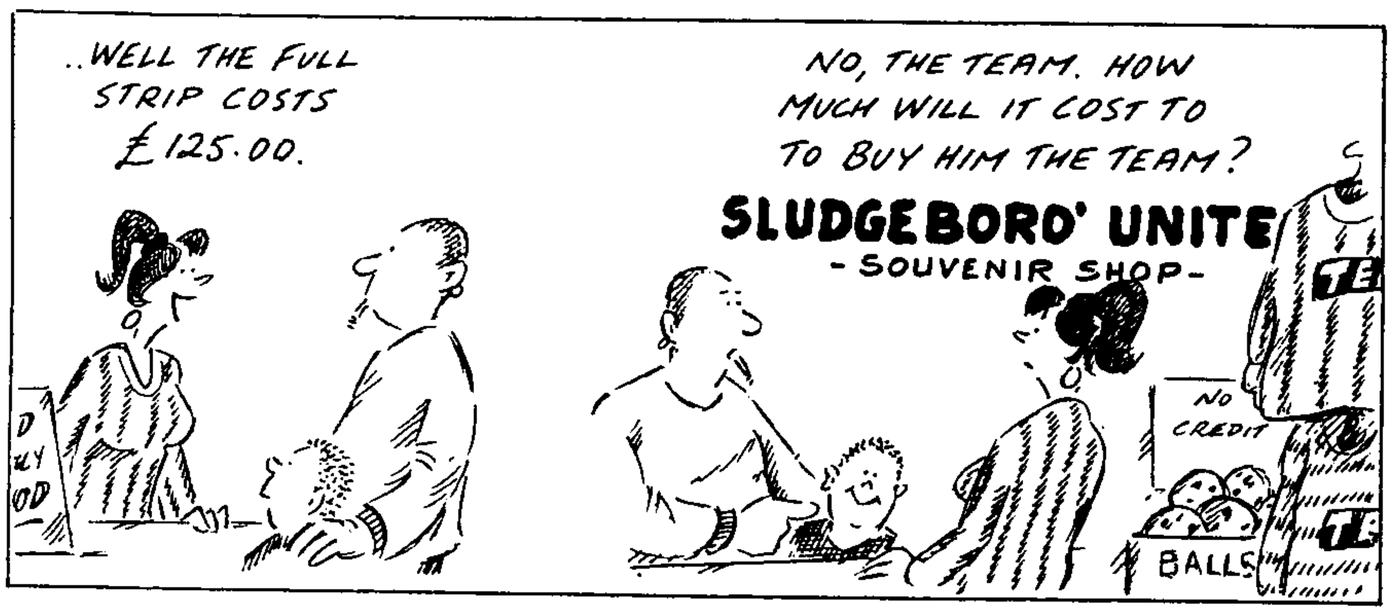
was arrested, and jailed for thirty days before I could finally make bail. By the time I'd got out, I'd lost my job, my car, my apartment, and my military reserve status.

"Two subsequent tests on the ashes turned up negative for drugs, and I was eventually cleared of all charges, and given back the urn. But all those three tests had consumed all of the ashes, so now I can't even fulfil my grandmother's last wish. And she was very anti-drugs all her life. In fact, her very last words to me were 'just say no'." (Atlanta Creative, 11 July 1998. Spotter B. Pierson)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

The Lottery Winners

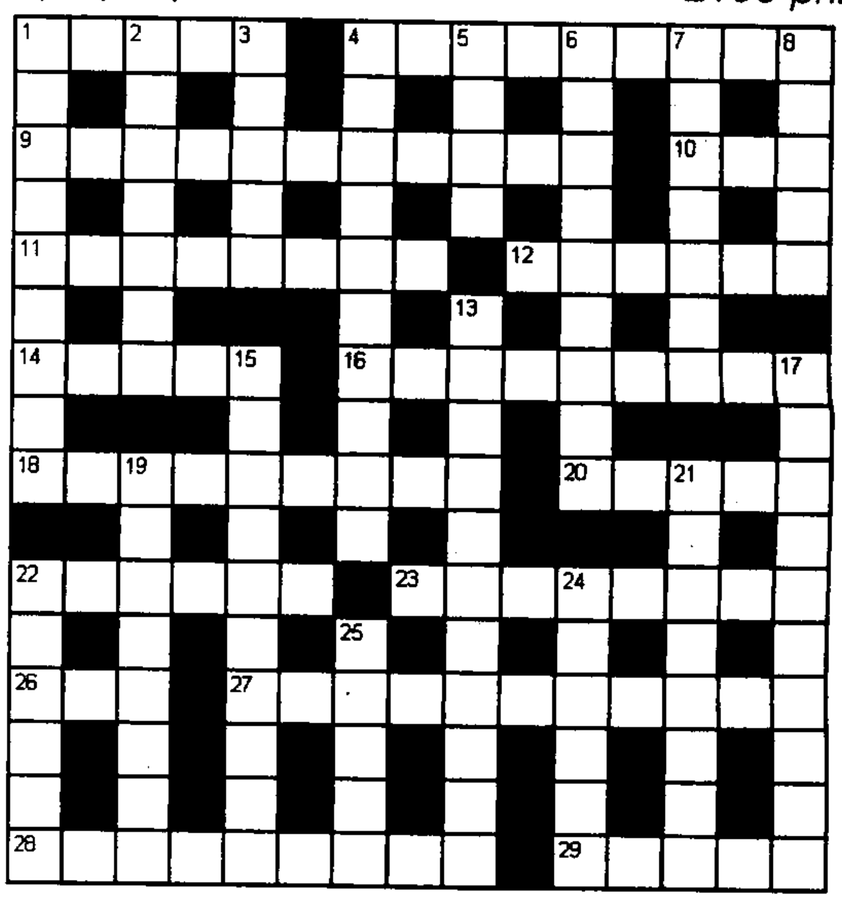
TURNER


..WELL THE FULL STRIP COSTS £125.00.
NO, THE TEAM. HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO TO BUY HIM THE TEAM?
SLUDGEBORO' UNITE
- SOUVENIR SHOP -
NO CREDIT
BALLS

EYE CROSSWORD 115

by Cyclops

£100 prize



ACROSS

1 Copulates like a rabbit – is jumpy (5)
4 Calumnist proffers rear to Mike Tyson type (9)
9 How Clinton spoke to certain senators with Monica present? (2,3,6)
10 Drive home a sexually aggressive type (3)
11 Turn it to enter shag area arse-over-elbow (8)
12 Old politician needs one fleece for sexual appetite! (6)
14 In bad taste, Clinton's vice, but just what the circling vultures want? (5)
16 Tinky's other half involved with rats and villains alike (4,5)
18 Decline hits familiar rogue dealer, we hear, one who won't follow orders (9)
20 Cook a bird (5)
22/23 Avid to take on non-union issues, the union leader's view of fat cats (6,8)
23 (see 22 ac.)
26 The *Spectator* has the ability to see things that are apparently not there! (3)
27 Fashion leader Tony's first split linked with Cyclops! (5-6)
28 Cook's place next to Brenda? Lord! (9)
29 Cane employees (5)

DOWN

1 Vulgar Othello, for instance, can (9)
2 Interrupts flipping TUC initially something rotten! (4,3)
3 Have intercourse with speed to reach climax (5)
4 Throw up on getting into an embrace, resulting in telling-off! (10)
5 Frightens BSE victims (4)
6 One who gets briefs off Britt's timeless rear (9)
7 He scored, giving prostitute one in back (7)
8 Lover-boy Cyclops in short jumper (5)
13 Stroke Brenda as a sweetener (10)
15 Endure dyke right to the very end (4-5)
17 Don't expect fancy strokes with such characters (4,5)
19 Local cinema bound to enter attack (4-3)
21 Bare tit wobbled – cap that! (7)
22 Nerd about right as description of Prince Philip? (5)
24 Right sweat loosening and dropping one's pants (5)
25 Potty character, name of Tony (4)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 9.10.98. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 114

Winner: C.J. PROUD

ACROSS: 1/4 Signal Failures 4 (see 1 ac.) 10 Obesity 11 Luvvies 12 Kama Sutra 13 Table 15 Oink 16 Get screwed 19 Roundheads 21 Arse 23 Rosie 24 Pesticide 26 (see 7) 27 In power 28 Town hall 29 Thyme.

DOWN: 1 Shock horror 2 Grey men 3 Aries 5 Alloa 6 Lavatory 7/26 ac. Rainbow Warrior 8 SAS 9 Eye to eye 14 Eddie George 17 Sadistic 18 Idle rich 20 Unscrew 22 Railway 24 Peril 25 Input 26 Wet.

FATWA LIFTED ON WRITER
A Nation Rejoices

by Our Fatwa Staff **Mel Fatwa** and **Griff Thinwa-Jones**

"I AM free at last," said Britain's most celebrated writer of fiction, Salman Dumpstie, 57, who had been declared an outlaw by the dreaded Knackatollah of the Yard for his outrageous story about refusing to give a blood test to the police because he was scared of needles.

Dumpstie had offended large numbers of the British community by driving around drunkenly and then coming up with a pathetic excuse to get out of it.

Taking the urine

Ever since this event Dumpstie had been forced to live in hiding in a newspaper office in Kensington. He was only ever seen after lunch appearing half-cut and brawling with his supporters.

He had even resorted to a disguise, pretending to be a diarist on the Daily Mail.

Now at last he is free once again and he is currently working on a new story *Satanic Verse For Drink*.

Says Dumpstie, "It is about the 3rd cousin of the Duke of Wimsdale who is engaged to an actress who used to have a part in Brookside. I can't tell you the ending because I haven't made it up yet."

Prick

But there are some who do not forgive Dumpstie so quickly and will not rest until he has paid the supreme penalty, ie forfeiting his motor vehicle licence under section 94(c) of the Highway Code (Drunk Diarists in Charge of Motor Vehicles).

Nigel Dumpstie is 90^{0} proof.

"I hate all these trailers before the main event"

MAN BUYS PUNCH SHOCK

by Our Media Staff **Phil Space**

AN Egyptian man has amazed press commentators by buying the magazine Punch.

He paid an extraordinary one figure sum (believed to be in the region of £1).

"It is the proudest day of my fuggin' life," he announced. "This will stop people saying that no one buys Punch any more. I just have. With sales of one, Punch's future is now secure."

German Elections In Full

Blairvaria (South)

New Labour Gain

Gerhard Blärer (Neues Arbeit) 757,432; **Helmut Thatchler** (Conservatisches) 233,400; **Mann Mit-Beard** (Grün Partisches) 174,352; **Adolf Hitler the Third** (Münster Ravinger Nazi Party) 128,402.

(That's enough German candidates. Ed.)

SALLY JOCKSTRAP
The Voice of Sport

WHO is going to land the coveted Tottenham Wednesday job? Come on, Will Carling — say yes or no! My money is on Billy Graham anyway!

WHAT'S gone wrong with our tennis players? Why are there no British boys in the top 5? They are all foreigners like Tim Henman and Greg Norman! Pull your socks up, Sports Minister, Frankie de Tory, and do something before the next World Cup!

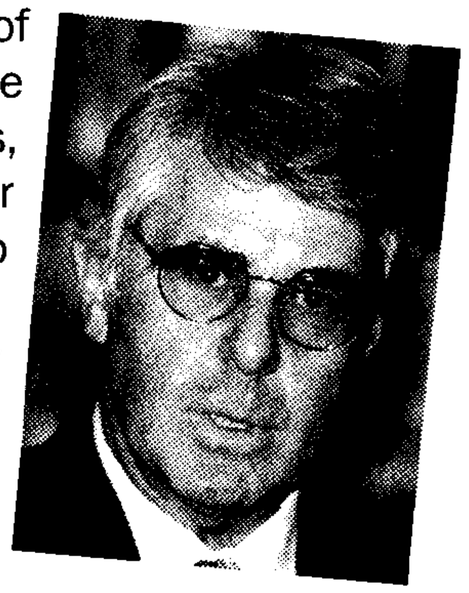
SEND the Ref off! The way the one on Saturday fell over when the Italian player gave him a push was a disgrace! Our national game is being undermined by drugtaking. Come on, Des Lynam, take a stand!

BY THE way, copies of my new book about the World Cup, Belgium 96, *will soon be on sale. It unfortunately had to be pulped because there was a picture of a cricket match on the cover.*

Advertisement

Slappers!

HUNDREDS of thousands of pounds can be yours with the help of Max Clifford Associates, the world's leading purveyor of slapper-related material to the media.



Are you a slightly ropey 45-year-old peroxide blonde who has recently enjoyed love romps with a TV celebrity?

Then let us embellish your tawdry story with titillating details (love nest, 6 times a night, champagne suppers, etc) and we can make you a fortune!

Says lucky slapper, Laura Lolly, "I was a boring housewife until I met Max Clifford and told him about my naughty nights with TV's Romeo Des. By the time my story appeared in the papers I did not recognise myself."

Send photos now to:

Mux Clifford Associates,
Slapper International, Unit 25,
The Trading Estate, Streatham,
London, UGH YUK.

NEW-LOOK QUEEN 1

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

As I am sure you all know, I have just come back from America, where I played a leading part in what could turn out to be the most important top-level oecumenical conference ever held!

The subject was our old friend the "Third Way". Or perhaps I should say "our new friend", because the vision of the Third Way is about as new as you can get!

It was a fantastic experience! There was I, the vicar of St Albion's in England, having the chance to tell some of the most important religious leaders in the world all about an idea which began right here, back home, in our own vicarage!

Who says a prophet isn't recognised in other people's countries? I certainly was!

Everyone there agreed that my "Third Way" was just about the most exciting, visionary, world-changing idea they had ever heard!

No one was keener on the idea than my American "buddy" the Reverend William Jefferson Clintstone of the Church of the Seven Day Fornicators.

He told us what a relief it was to talk about something that was really meaningful, after all the trouble he has been having with his congregation trying to get him de-frocked for having an inappropriate relationship with a

female member of his Church's Family Values Youth Group!

We all gave him a big hand, which he said was always something he appreciated!

So I've come back all fired up to take the "Third Way" message into the Third Millennium!

Here in St Albion's we are going to launch a campaign to spread the Third Way round a new spiritual training course which, even though it is voluntary, I expect every member of the parish to attend.

Some of you may have come across the "Alpha Course". Well, our version is even better, which is why we've called it the "Albion Course".

I don't want to say too much about this, because it might sound too much like blowing one's own trumpet! So, I've asked our Editor Mr Campbell to set out the basics in a rather clever format below my newsletter.

See you on the course! (And I don't mean the one where you play golf!)

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Mortimer, who has been "having doubts" and, foolishly, expressing them in local newspapers. Let's hope he soon regains his trust in Tony and realises that it is the duty of every parishioner to keep very quiet when their faith deserts them.

NOTICES

■ Our Harvest Festival will be on October 5 at 11am. The Vicar wishes it to be known that genetically modified produce is perfectly acceptable so long as it is clearly labelled as such (let's not live in the past, farmers and allotment holders!). Also, anyone wishing to bring no produce is free to do so, in thanksgiving for the blessing of set-aside.

The Vicar has written a special chorus which we shall sing after the presentation of the cheque to Church funds from the Area Representative of Monsanto:

"We plough the fields and scatter
The improved seed on the land.
So let's not be unreasonable
And try to get it banned."

!!!!!!Welcome!!!!!!

Sincere congratulations to the four new faces who are going to join the steering group of the PCC. Well done to Mark, Kathy, Liz and Pete! It's always good to have different points of view in a broad church like St Albion's! No doubt, you'll be coming up with lots of fresh ideas, but don't be too disappointed if the vicar does not have time to consider any of them!

PS. The rumours suggesting that I tried to block the promotion of these exciting young people are entirely unfounded. Others may have done so, but you can't really blame me if loyal members of the parish try and stop a few troublemakers spoiling it for everyone! TB.

WHAT IS ALBION?

A *nyone interested in finding out more about the "Third Way".*

L *earning and laughter. It's possible to learn about Tony's ideas and have fun at the same time. But you mustn't laugh at the "Third Way" — that is neither clever nor helpful.*

B *lair. The name of our vicar and the inventor of the "Third Way".*

I *ndispensable, which is what the Third Way is! And also idiots, which is what everyone who attacks the Third Way are (see our prayer for Mr Mortimer!).*

O *lives with Organic Bread! Finger food for those happy evenings when parishioners will get together in small groups to find out more about the Third Way, the Truth and the Life!*

N *o one is to be left out, except those who are so lazy as not to turn up, or so silly as that they know better than the Vicar. (See prayers for Mr Mortimer.)*

Who was it who said, "I am Albion and Omega, the beginning and the end?"
(For answer see Vicar's Website
www.swingingtony@stalbion.co.uk)

B.B

CHURCH OUTING TO BLACKPOOL

By the time you read this, the church outing will have been a great success! Everyone will have had a marvellous time and there will have been no trouble on the bus! There will be a full report in our next issue. Meantime, thank you to the sponsors, especially Mr Somerfield, who generously paid for the plastic name badges and the smart baseball caps issued to all parishioners. These, by the way, have replaced the old-fashioned Kiss-Me-Quick hats so popular with Mr Prescott and his fellow members of the Working Men's Club.

THAT STARR INVESTIGATION

IN FULL

(WARNING: The following transcript contains strong language and explicit sexual references, so *please* read on and enjoy it)

Q: Would you please state your full name for the record?

Starr: Kenneth Torquemada Ringo Starr III.

Q: Mr Starr, did you or did you not screw the President?

Starr: I did not, sir.

Q: Did you *try* and screw the President?

Starr: I have no memory of that, sir.

Q: I put it to you, Mr Starr, that you wanted his ass.

Starr: It depends what you mean by his ass.

Q: You wanted to shaft him, didn't you?

Starr: I did not, sir.

Q: You abused your position of authority to harass him, then you cornered him in his office and grabbed him by the short and curlies.

Starr: That is not my recollection, sir.

Q: Do you not admit that this was an inappropriate investigation?

Starr: I have done nothing wrong.

Q: You interfered with the President's evidence, didn't you?

Starr: I deny that.

Q: Let's face it, Mr Starr, you wanted the President "fucked".

Starr: It depends on your definition of the word "fucked". It is my belief that since the President *is* not and has not been completely fucked by me, then it follows that I did not go the whole way.

Q: Are you saying you did *not* have sexual revelations?

Starr: I do not deny that sexual revelations took place, but I stand by my earlier statement. Whatever it was.

Q: At the very least, Mr Starr, you wanted to do "a job" on the President.

Starr: That is a personal matter between me and Mr Clinton.

Q: Is it not true that on 21st September 1998 the President was on his knees in front of you?

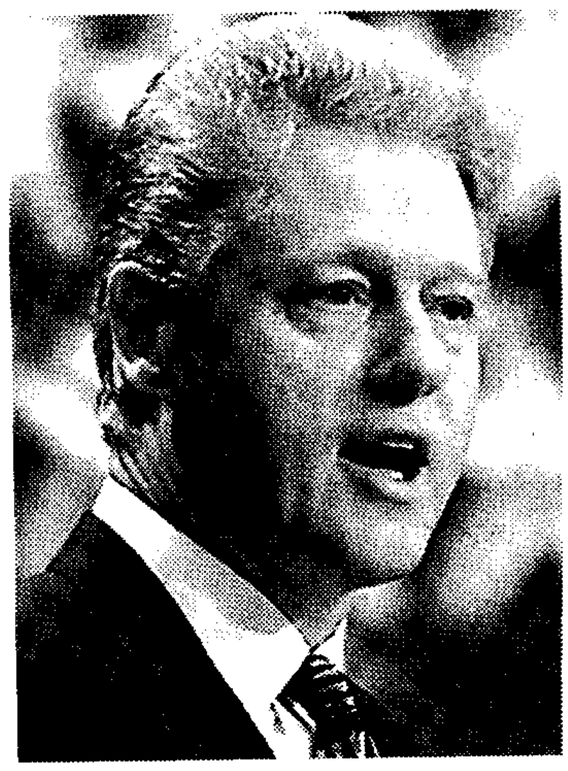
Starr: That is...

Q: And you had him by the balls?

Starr: I did not.

(At this point the reader gets up and goes to the restroom to have a much needed bath after reading this stuff)

In the wake of the Lewinsky Affair **Dr Thomas Utterfraud** asks "Is the Editor just a sex addict?"



The Editor couldn't get enough

THE CLINTON affair raises important medical issues, not the least of which concerns the emotional and mental health of the most powerful man in the Times. Many editors seek solace in sex stories and could be said to be sexaholics, needing sex stories once or twice a page to keep them satisfied. However, their demand for constant stimulation can lead them to errors of judgement in which sexual titillation assumes a higher priority than any other activity such as politics, economics or the Liberal Democrat Conference in Brighton (cont. p. 69)

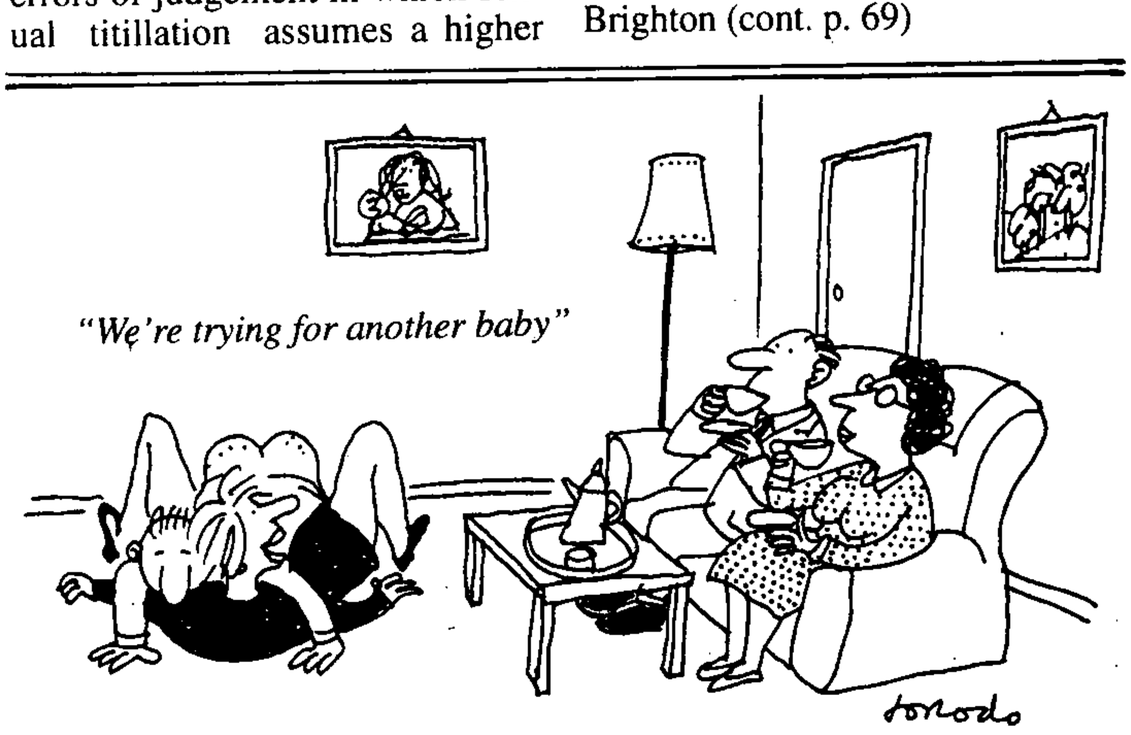
I Say Leave Clinton Alone

by **Polly Technic**
(now the University of Toynbee)

WHEN are people going to grow up, and stop going on as though sex was important?

Clinton's fumblings with some silly young floozie in his office have got nothing to do with serious, adult politics.

It is time to leave the leader of the Free World to get on with the job we all elected him to do — ie, carrying out the liberal, progressive, forward-looking agenda that is supported by every right-thinking person on the left: eg, setting up medicare, defending the right to choose, and bombing the hell out of Third World aspirin factories in the hope of diverting attention from his private life.



"I thought we'd outsource our meal tonight"

FOREIGN OFFICE LAUNCHES POSTER CAMPAIGN TO REBRAND BRITAIN "MODERN TO REPLACE TRADITIONAL"

BRITAIN

A possible design

FURY AT RADIO 3 APPOINTMENT

by Our Music Staff **Lunchtime O'Concert**
(from St John's, Smith Square)

THERE was widespread outrage among senior BBC executives when the new Controller of Radio 3 was named today.

The appointment of Mr Roger Wright was immediately attacked on the grounds that he has no qualifications for the job of running Britain's premier classical music station.

Said one insider, "This man has no experience of top-level management consultancy. He is not even a trained accountant. He probably hasn't even run a single focus group in his life.

"All he has done is to run orchestras and play classical music. No wonder everyone here thinks John Birt has finally gone off his head."

"My record in radio speaks for itself," he said. "I have turned Radio 4 into the most talked about radio station in Britain. Everyone says it's terrible."

LATE NEWS

BIRT'S BEST FRIEND WINS BBC NO. 2 POST

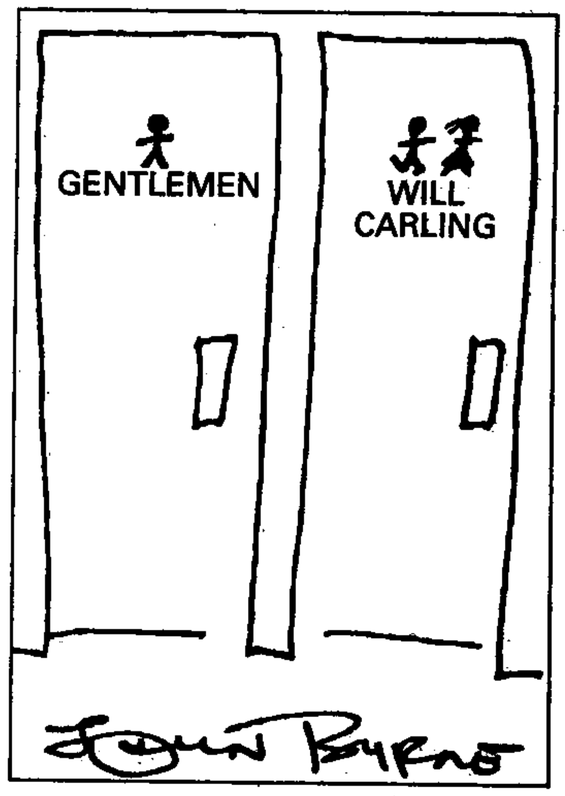
MR MATTHEW Birtister, who has never made a television programme and is best known for losing 7 millions listeners to Radio 1, said last night that he was delighted to be given the job of ruining (surely 'running'? Ed.) the BBC's television service.

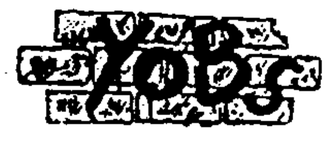
VERY LATE NEWS

MR MARK Birtford, currently studio manager of Radio Neasden's *Good Morning North Circular* show, is to step up to take charge of the BBC's World Service.

A delighted Mr Birtford said last night, "Thank you, Sir John. I shall do whatever you say."

(Reuters)





HUSBAND

St Crumpets Ladies' College

(An independent girls' school affiliated to St Cakes)

Celebrity Term begins today. There are 307 daughters of famous people in the school. Lourdes Madonna (Virgins) is Head of Pop. Poshella Beckham (Ziggers) is Victoria Ludorum. Melella B. (Zaggers) is Captain of Spices. Miss E.R.L. Tweed-Skirt has retired as Matron. She is replaced by Miss V.D. Tongue-Stud who takes responsibility for body piercing and tattoos. All Saints Day will be celebrated on Nov. 12th when there will be a rendition of the school song "Never Ever" *(shurely Floreat Crumpetana?)*. Discs will be played on the Upper Downer on 17th March. Slappers are on Dec. 12th.

The Oratory School

Mugging Term begins today *(cont. p. 94)*

NEW MIRACLE SLIMMING PILL LAUNCHED ON NHS

by Our Medical Staff
Lunchtime O'Bese

THE MAKERS of Xenica, the new anti-obesity drug, promise that no one will be disappointed by the results of their new products.

Said a spokesman, "The NHS will instantly lose millions of pounds. A large body will be forced to tighten its belt and slim down dramatically." He continued, "Staff will be lighter as will resources and services. There is, however, one side effect and that is that our company will become enormously bloated with gross profits and bulging coffers."

Nicholas Soames is 49 stone.

THEATRE

Blue Movie

by David Pubic-Hare
(adapted from La Bonque by Wiener Schnitzler)

Reviewed by Charles Spencer

PHWOAR! Blimey! Cor! That Nicole Kidman! Wouldn't you? I bet you would! Phwoar!

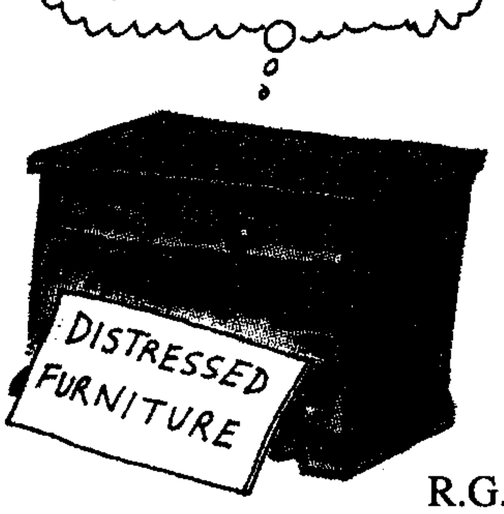
Pop Porn

by Ben Elton Johnson

Reviewed by Charles Spencer

PHWOAR! Blimey! Cor! That Emma Noble! Wouldn't you? I bet you would! I wish I was James Major! Phwoar!

© The Daily Pornograph and all other newspapers



R.G.J

The Daily Pornograph

Britain's biggest-selling quality daily Friday, October 2, 1998

(1 million copies given away on trains)

It's

THE CLINTON PULL-OUT!

94 pages of top level analysis including

Bill Deedes on Oral Shexsh
and John Keegan on Talking Dirty on the Phone

PLUS Telegraph offer: Year's Supply Of Viagra For Every Copy Sold

Honeymooner Mel B 'Too Busy' To Watch That Clinton Dirty Video

by Our Political Staff Boris Johnson

TOP POP earner Mel B (better known to Telegraph readers as Scary Spice) has got nothing to do with the Clinton scandal.

But we thought that you'd like to know her views on the subject rather than read some boring man in a suit explaining the rules of the impeachment process.

You see, you're bored by that last sentence already, aren't you?

So, here's another pic of Mel B on her honeymoon (where she's probably "at it" right now while you're reading this piece!).

Lucky old husband! And lucky old readers of the Daily Pornograph who get all the world's filth as it happens, when it happens!

Inside

What Mel B Thinks About The Russian Meltdown **3**

A Spice Girl's View Of Tony Blair's Third Way **5**

Scary's Hot Tips For Those German Election Results **8**

Has Capitalism A Future? Professor Melanie B Offers Her Analysis (with candid honeymoon pics) **10**

Comment by Charles Phwoar, Editor of The Daily Pornograph (formerly the Daily Hellograph, formerly the Daily Hurleygraph)

Clinton — It *Is* An Immoral Issue

VARIOUS liberal commentators have argued that the details of the sexual shenanigans indulged in by President Clinton (see Full-Colour Pull-Out, only in today's soaraway Daily Pornograph) are in some way a side issue from the real problems facing America and the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mr Clinton's sex life *is* an immoral issue, thank God — and so is this issue of the Daily Telegraph. If you're keen to read words such as "smear", "stain", "grope", "genitalia" and "Ambrose Evans-Pritchard" then this is the paper for you! Enjoy!

©The Dirty Telegraph

In Tomorrow's Telegraph

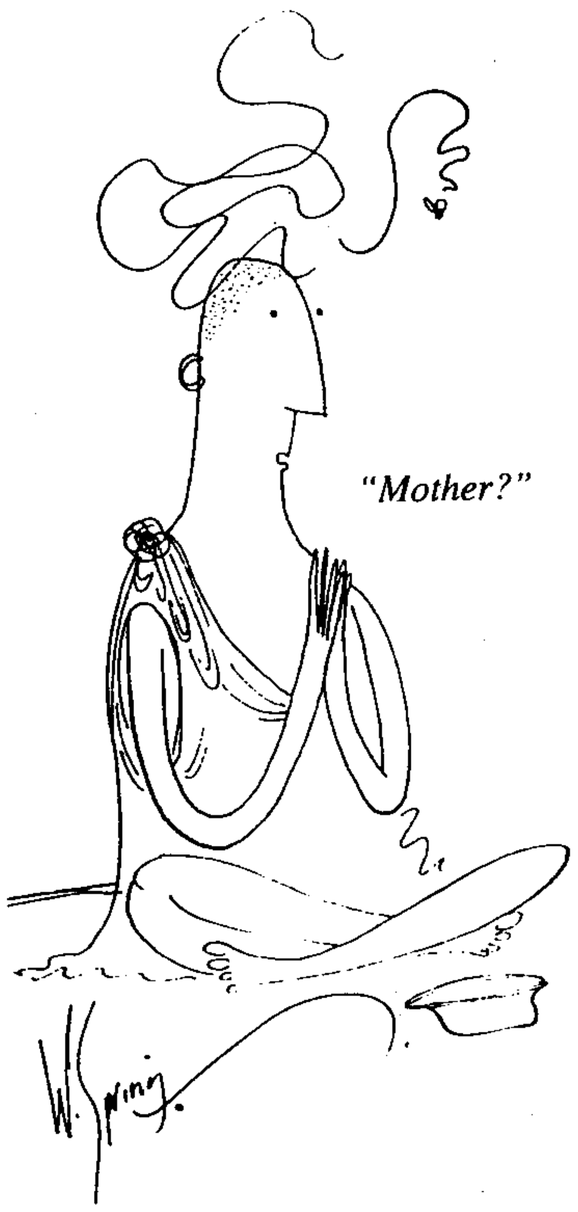
- **Perjury is a serious offence for which the President must not be forgiven 2**
- **Why is Jonathan Aitken being persecuted for telling a little white lie to protect his family? 3**

THE gardens of Child Okeford Manor in Child Okeford are open this Sunday from 2 to 5.30pm in conjunction with the village church flower festival and a novelty god show.

Blacknore Vale Magazine

Some computer experience is desirable but not essential as full training will be given. Applicants must be well presented and have genuine apathy towards the needs of our Guests.

Travel Inn advertisement



SELF-EMPLOYED CARPET FITTERS
Urgently Required
To cover the Cornwall area
The West Briton

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Florence Griffith-Joyner, American Athlete

So. Farewell then
Flo-Jo.

The star-spangled
Super-sprinter.

You were only
38.

You went
Very fast

And finished long
Before your
Contemporaries.

Perhaps
This result
Was drug-
Assisted
Too?

Ee-Jay Thribb (17½ seconds)

Those Commonwealth Games Results In Full

(continued from p. 1)

Shooting

Water Cannon, 200 metres
1. Malaysia

Rubber Bullets, 5 metres
1. Malaysia

Live Ammunition, point blank
1. Malaysia

Street Running

4 x 400 metres
1. Malaysian Crowd
2. Malaysian Police

Throwing The Canister (Tear Gas)

1. Malaysian Police
2. Malaysian Crowd

Smiling And Pretending That Nothing Is Happening (3-Day Event)

1. H.M. The Queen (England)
2. Mahatir Mohammad (Malaysia)

Relay: Malaysian team hands over the baton

The Rebranding of Britain Part 94

The Coming Revolution That Is Going To Change Britain's Politics Forever

The Third Woy

by Our Constitutional Staff Vernon Bogdasnore

MAKE no mistake! Politics will never be the same again when elder statesman Lord Jenkins of Halfdead delivers his long-awaited 8,500 page invitation to lunch at the Garrick Club *(surely 'report on how to reform Britain's voting procedures?' Ed.)*.

Lord Jenkins is expected to consider a number of methods of proportional representation.

These include STV (the Single Transferable Vote), AV (Alternative Voting), MLV (Multiple List Voting) and HMG (Her Majesty's Government to stay in power forever under the enlightened leadership of TB).

Lord Jenkins is expected to come down in favour of a form of HMG, a system already in successful use in such countries as Malaysia, North Korea and Cuba.

However, he may recommend that the HMG system should only be adopted so long as it includes an element of LDC (Liberal Democratic Coalition) which involves a permanent seat at the Garrick for Lord Jenkins *(surely 'a seat in the Cabinet for Mr Ashdown'? Ed.)*.

Said one leading constitutional expert, "There is the first-past-the-post system, there is PR and then there is this ludicrous idea — The Third Woy".

Lord Jenkins is 107.

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

NEW ALPHAYED COURSE FAILS TO WIN CONVERTS

by Clifford Longley

THE controversial "Alphayed Course" has already run into trouble by failing to attract any interest at all despite a huge publicity campaign.

The idea of the course is to discover the answer to life's major questions, such as:

- **Who killed Diana?**
- **Where is the white Fiat Uno?**
- **Why can't the owner of Harrods get a British passport?**

However, would-be converts to the teachings of the Alphayed Course have been disappointed.

"I signed up believing that this programme would supply enlightenment," said one gullible journalist (P. Moron), "but it now seems that the whole thing is a con."

L. Ron. Fayed is 110.

"Your hanging baskets are looking good this year, Sir Ranulf"

LEADER ACCUSED OF 'INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS'

by Our Political Staff **Ambrose Evans-Dipstick**

POLITICAL opponents were tonight openly accusing Tony Blair of entering into what they term as "inappropriate relationships".

The allegations claim that Blair would often have sessions at his Downing Street home, which would see him entertaining "young friends", who would each take it in turn to "suck up" to the Prime Minister. Said one critic: "It's obvious that the Prime Minister has cheated on all those who were faithful to him back in April 1997, and now it's clear that he's willing to jump into bed with just about anyone he sees fit. Some of his bedfellows are particularly unsavoury, especially this Australian he once met in Wapping, who insists on flashing somebody else's tits off every time the Sun comes out."

Continuing our serialisation of the world's most important book, *Why I Hate Mrs Thatcher* by the Rt Hon Sir Edward Heath PC, MP

Chapter 94:

My Nightmare Ordeal With The Firing Squad

THERE CAN be no doubt at all that the worst moment of my life was the morning I woke up to find that I had been fired. I opened my newspaper to find the headline "Grocer Out — Wilson In". Then, a few months later, I had to endure it all over again when I was fired by my disloyal party, as well as my disloyal country. I have never forgotten these acts of disloyalty, although I have never referred to them until this day.

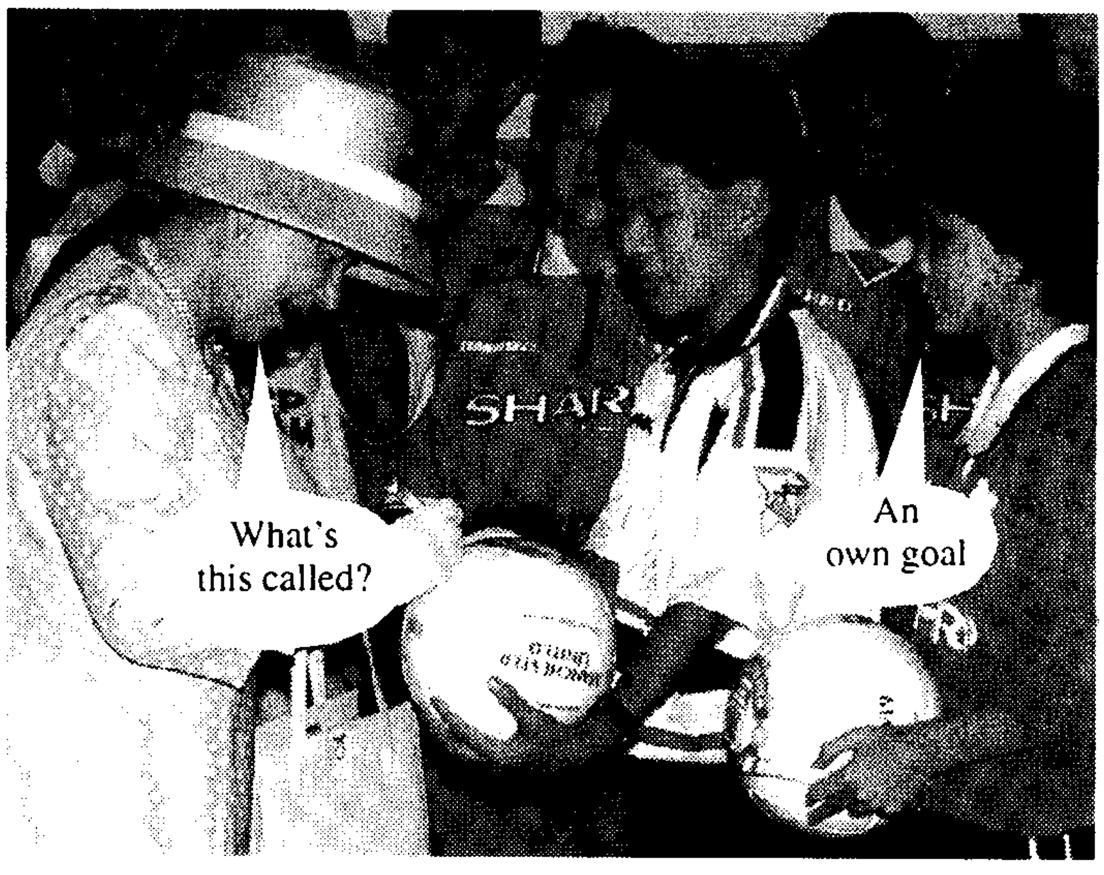
Chapter 95:

Why I Never Got Married

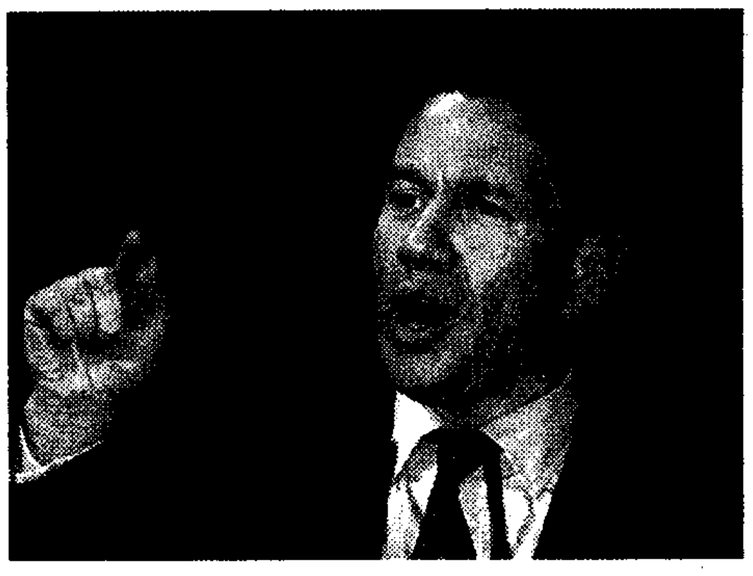
ONE OF the most important historical questions about my premiership is why I never married.

The explanation, I can now reveal, is that although the names of many women were suggested to me, including that of the well-known pianist Daniel Baremboim, it was out of the question that I could marry any of them for the very good reason that I was already deeply in love with someone else, ie myself.

NEW-LOOK QUEEN 2



DIARY



MICHAEL PORTILLO

It was a truly terrible night for the Conservatives. Truly terrible. But something happened to me on that truly terrible night, something unexpected and slightly shocking and really rather wonderful.

I became a different person.

I stopped listening to Wagner. Now I listen to the more caring rhythms of Roger Whittaker.

I put aside my Spengler and my Nietzsche. These days, I prefer the more compassionate vision of Catherine Cookson.

I no longer wear dark pin-striped suits and stiff collars with flashy ties. Instead, I go for a softer look: pastel shades of mauve and cerise, with fabrics gentle to the touch — preferably cashmere if I can afford it!

The day after that truly terrible night, I gave up eating steak. Today, I always make a beeline for the Vegetarian menu. Carrots, gently shredded, are a particular favourite. Cucumber, beetroot, apples, bran — lovely. Just so long as there's no animal killed on my behalf. Animals deserve better than that.

Mike Portillo: Peter, you're a risk-taker.

Peter Mandelson: So are you, Mike. We don't mind sticking up for our beliefs, do we?

Mike Portillo: And what's more you're a genuinely lovely, lovely guy.

Peter Mandelson: Mike — you've changed your hair, right? To me, it shows the softer, more gentle you. The side of you the public never gets to see.

Mike Portillo: Thanks, Peter. And you've lost weight. Hey, you're looking great!

Peter Mandelson: Sorry you lost that seat, Mike. Can't wait to see you bounce back!

Mike Portillo: Bless you for that, Peter. Must dash! Ciao!

And as you see, I don't talk any more. I prefer to listen.

Yes, I now spend hours and hours every day of the week travelling up and down the country, listening to ordinary, decent people telling me exactly why they loathe my guts. Then I disappear behind the door for a short while. Blow my nose. Wipe away those tears. Take a deep breath.

And then I go back and ask them to tell me again.

Mike Portillo: Ordinary person, I'd really like to know exactly what you think is wrong with me.

Ordinary person: You're arrogant. You're cruel. You're selfish. You're out of touch. And not only that. You smell.

Mike Portillo: It's very good of you to tell me that. And would you say, on reflection, that I am also heartless and snooty and too big for my boots?

Ordinary person: Certainly. And you make little children cry, you horrid man.

Mike Portillo: Thank you, thank you. I'm so terribly, terribly sorry. I want to apologise to you and all the other ordinary persons up and down the country for what we as a Party did to you. For these and all the sins I cannot remember, I am truly sorry.

Well, that ordinary person was clearly very upset by the way we Tories ran the country. Pretty depressing news for us there, I'm afraid. But I've listened, and I've learnt. And if that ordinary person had one message for us, I think it was this. Stick to your guns. You're doing a great job. This lot in New Labour have got nothing new to offer. Carry on just the same as before, and you'll walk it.

A sobering message, and one we must heed. But a message not entirely without hope. Because basically what the ordinary people of this country are telling me loud and clear is this. Yes, we made one or two mistakes in presentation. Yes, we probably spent too much time trying to sort out the affairs of the country, and not enough time buttering up the broadcasters. And yes, we had a bit of trouble getting our message over. But basically they like us and respect us and they can't wait for us to get rid of this Labour government.

Mike Portillo: William, I know you to be a man of intelligence, conviction, charm, good looks, humour and an outstanding fashion sense. But the ordinary people think the opposite. They think you're stupid, out of touch, pompous, ugly and cold-hearted — in short, a complete and utter prat. What are you going to do about it?

William Hague: We've got to build on that perception. We've got to reach out to all those people and say, hey, yes, I may be a prat — but at least I'm a complete and utter prat. We've got to show them we're undergoing a total transformation. And that with their help, I'll become an even more thorough-going prat in the years ahead.

And the listening process continues. The way I listen is to keep my mouth closed and stare in the direction of the other person. When their lips seem to have stopped going up and down, I shake their hand and say, "Thank you — *insert first name* — for letting me share your opinions. Goodbye *insert first name*!"

Yes, it's good to listen. It's certainly made me a much more caring, thoughtful person. Today, I'm wearing a casual shirt with V neck jersey and brown slacks. Tomorrow, I'm planning to read the new Maeve Binchy in a spotty cravat.

Yesterday I had this frank exchange with an old man in a dole queue:

Me: You must be Albert! Great!

Old Man: I've been out of a job and homeless for twelve years and I hate your bloody guts.

Me: Super. Super. And what do you think of me, Albert?

Old Man: Fuckin bastard.

Me: That's the spirit, Albert! And any special message for the Conservatives?

Old Man: Piss off the bloody lot of you.

Me: Super! Lovely! It's been great to listen! Lots of fun!

On reflection, I think what Albert is saying is that we in the Conservative party will have his vote if we sharpen up our opposition to the single currency. And so begins the process of rebuilding trust in the community — by listening. By the way, have you heard the new Chris de Burgh? Mmmm. It's as warm as a drop of dew on a mellow Autumn day. Ciao!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

FROM 'MODELS CLOSE-UP BY DAVID BAILEY'
BAILEY, IF I WAS TO SUM YOU UP.....
...I'D SAY YOU'RE VERY CLEVER.... AND VERY INVENTIVE
WHY'S THAT THEN?
BECAUSE YOU KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO CAPTURE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN!..
....YOU PROMISE TO MAKE US FAMOUS!
GENIUS!
BRILLIANT!

BISHOPSTONE
£180,000
Swindon c.6 miles, Marlborough c.14 miles
A modern detached swelling located within this popular village pond.

Swindon Evening Advertiser

Up to now, patients have tended to be reluctant to discuss their erections, often only mentioning the subject as they reach the door on departure – the so-called 'hand on knob' consultation.

The Practitioner

Literary Review

Hymn to himself

Losing My Virginity: The Autobiography
Richard Branson
(Virgin, £20)

A HUNDRED years ago anyone who wanted to read about the careers of successful businessmen would have been firmly directed to the pages of popular fiction. Late Victorian novels come crammed with captains of industry – larger than life, rapacious, devious to a man.

Like Melmotte, the gargantuan swindler of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1872), they have a habit of coming to bad – or sad – ends. Over the intervening century, though, novelists have lost the trick of framing this kind of thing – most modern novels about "business" are the purest corn. The captains of industry, meanwhile, have grown less modest, and contemporary guides to tycoon life tend to consist of items like *Losing My Virginity* – an absolutely colossal exercise in vanity publishing which prompts the innocent reflection that at least Rupert Murdoch doesn't use the vehicle provided by HarperCollins to publish books about himself.

Branson has spent his 30-year business career having "ideas". As a teenager he dreamt up the idea for a student magazine and finessed his way into interviews with Jagger and Lennon. Then it was records by mail order, then a fully-fledged record company, playing host to a clutch of heavily subsidised 60s flotsam, certainly, but also coming up with Mike Oldfield, whose *Tubular Bells* (1973) effectively underwrote Branson's schemes for the next half decade. Shops, airlines, publishing – the notions begin to stack up like windfall apples. Coutts wants to call in the overdraft, but no: our hero has another wheeze and somehow, implausibly, the money gets juggled around and it all works out.

Curiously enough, especially given the predilection for ballooning and so on, it's *Boy's Own Paper* stuff – hugely unreal, and giving no idea (well, hardly any) of the strains and torments that necessarily underpin this kind of life lived at this kind of pace. A likeable guy, sure – and there's something almost childlike in the relish with which he reproduces notelets from Princess Diana – but scant trace of the pronounced streak of ruthlessness or the canny helpers (Virgin Music was largely built on Simon Draper's gift for talent-spotting) that smoothed his path.

At times the forgetfulness becomes almost chronic. Take this introduction to a survey of the burgeoning empire's prospects in the early 80s: "In 1981 Virgin Music finally began to earn some money. We had nine singles in the top twenty, including 'Gentlemen Take Polaroids' by Japan, which got to number one. Other top twenty hits were OMD's 'Enola Gay', XTCs 'Generals and Majors' and Ian Gillan's 'Trouble'. The Professionals, The Skids and China Crisis were also successes." As it happens, Gentlemen Take Polaroids was actually an album, released in 1980. Generals and Majors was indeed a single, but also released the year before, as was Trouble. China Crisis, on the other hand, didn't cut a record until 1982.

Never mind, it's my company and I can say what I like. Or not. Needless to relate, several of the more discreditable episodes in Virgin's glorious history don't get a look in, and you won't find any mention of the attempt to press a recording by remnants of the Sex Pistols and Ronnie Biggs titled "Cosh The Driver", eventually prevented by a production plant walkout.

But as I say this is an exercise in vanity publishing, a dangerous activity whether one happens to be a retired schoolmaster with a sheaf of dog-eared poems or a multi-millionaire who owns the publishing firm. The general effect resembles a child let loose in a king-sized nursery full of inexhaustible pleasures and pursuits and fab companions who can be beckoned in and kicked out at will. As Johnny Rotten so presciently remarked, back in 1976 or so, "Never trust a hippy".

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ ONCE again, yawns all round for this year's Booker shortlist.

Even their fondest admirers, not to mention the tribe of book page stooges, have been forced to admit the inadequacies of Julian Barnes's *England, England* and Ian McEwan's *Amsterdam*. Patrick McCabe's *Breakfast on Pluto* is not one of his best.

Outsider value is furnished by Martin Booth's virtually self-published *The Industry of Souls*, while non-broadsheet media coverage is thankfully guaranteed by the bus-driving Magnus Mills, author of *The Restraint of Beasts*. Beryl Bainbridge, making her fifth appearance on the shortlist, should clean up with *Master Georgie*.

■ HOW has the saintly Stuart Proffitt fared since his enforced departure from HarperCollins in the wake of the Chris Patten fiasco to the mellower climes of Viking Penguin?

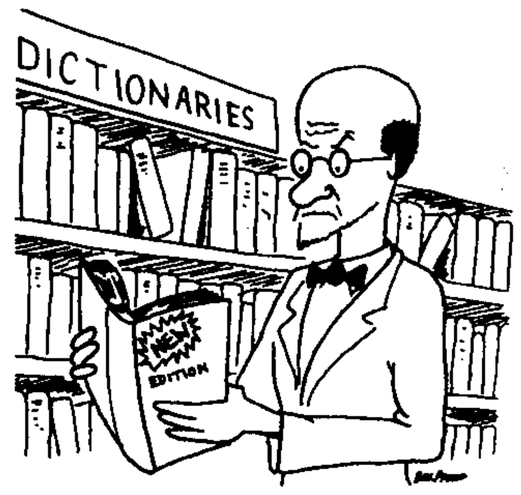
Happily the purposeful attitudes that characterised his time in the Fulham Palace Road have been well to the fore in his new eyrie at Wright's Lane. Aghast at the modest dimensions of his new office, Stuart insisted that the editorial colleague inhabiting the room next door should be relocated and the wall knocked down, thus giving him a space consistent with the dignity of his position.

What does his boss Helen Fraser think of her new chum? There are lurid reports of a screaming fit thrown by la Fraser when she discovered that Stuart had shelled out £50,000 for a book she had already rejected twice!

■ **HARVEY PORLOCK's column in the Sunday Times books section cattily congratulates Peter Preston on the large amount of favourable coverage his book The 51st State has received in the Observer and Guardian.**

"Of course, the fact that this first novelist happens to be editorial director of the Guardian Media Group might have helped," it snipes.

How strange, then, that the front page of the ST's fiercely independent books supplement is given over to a glowing review of the latest thriller by Robert Harris, the highly-paid new columnist for, er, the Sunday Times.



"Hmmm... somewhat hyperneologistic"

■ THE Eye has received a puzzling fax from Rachel Cowdrill of Aspire Publishing, Exeter, denying our allegation that her company is about to publish Jonathan Hunt's book about the Neil Hamilton affair, Trial by Conspiracy.

"Aspire Publishing is not publishing a book entitled Trial by Conspiracy," she insists. "Presumably you will wish to print a retraction together with an apology for misleading your readers."

Er, presumably not, actually. For the selfsame firm has lately been sending out copies of a synopsis headed: "Trial by Conspiracy by Jonathan Boyd Hunt. To be published by Aspire Publishing.

The only mistake in our last story was that we called the author Jonathan Bowen Hunt instead of Jonathan Boyd Hunt. But Mr Hunt and his publishers also seem to suffer from some confusion about their identities. Another recent press release from Aspire claimed that Trial by Conspiracy would be "launched" by a New Zealand-based firm called Greenzone Publishing, "sister company of Aspire". But when the Eye rang Greenzone we were told that all inquiries about the book were being handled by Rachel Cowdrill of Aspire.

And what of Jonathan Boyd Hunt? In the publicity material issued by Aspire, he describes himself as an "investigative TV reporter", but this scarcely does justice to his varied career. During the 1970s and early 1980s he worked as an HGV mechanic. In 1984, he founded a road haulage company, J.B. Hunt Transport Ltd, which folded four years later. Then he set up a business importing "classic cars" from California, which also came to grief. From 1990 to 1993 he was drilling for oil in Libya, after which he was unemployed for a while.

Hunt's only journalistic experience consists of a brief stint as a freelance for the regional show Granada Tonight, from which he was sacked in 1996. Colleagues found him impossible to work with, and the programme's editor, Sue Woodward, describes him as "a fucking nutter".

This is also the view of several people who have seen his potentially libellous manuscript. Could it explain why, only a month before publication, Aspire Publishing is hastily trying to distance itself from the book?

'Bookworm'

footnotes

MILLAR SLIGHT

CAN you spot the difference between the plight of these two men, who have recently left the same company?

POOR MAN: Millar

1 *Andrew Millar, former clinical director for British Biotech.*

The firm's future, its brand new offices and many millions invested by stock exchange speculators depend on developing new wonder drugs. British Biotech has tested three new drugs.

The first, an anti-cancer drug, was abandoned in 1996 as a flop and a danger to patients. By 1997, Zacutex, an anti-pancreatitis drug, was flopping in its clinical trials; and Marimastat, another anti-cancer drug, had only a 40 percent chance of success.

Dr Millar became increasingly worried about gung-ho company press releases about Zacutex and Marimastat which were not justified by the results of clinical trials. In May 1997 he wrote a memo to the chief executive setting out his worries about absurdly expensive commercial development and public relations hype. He thought there might be a connection between the exciting press releases and the vesting date of directors' share options.

In February this year he took his worries to an investment company, Perpetual, which has a substantial shareholding in British Biotech. As soon as his bosses heard about this approach, Millar was sacked without compensation but with an insulting press release.

Despite his excellent qualifications, no one in the industry will employ him. He is being sued for breach of confidentiality by the company and its expensive lawyers (Slaughter & May) and has been forced to hire lawyers to defend himself and counterclaim. The expense of these actions threatens to force him and his family to sell their house.

RICH MAN: McCullagh

2 *Keith McCullagh, British Biotech's former chief executive who sacked Millar, and was mainly responsible for all those press releases.*

In January 1995, after a big hitch for the first drug, McCullagh sold 111,700 shares at £5.25 each (they are now worth 31p). This month McCullagh leaves the company as a result of the row with Millar. He stepped down at the annual general meeting, his ears ringing with the unctuous praise of his colleagues who are only too glad to see him go. Though his company never produced or sold a single product, McCullagh pockets a year's salary of £430,000 and a range of other benefits including a "top-up" into his pension fund of £242,000 to bring his pension "more closely into line with the market rate".

Eye 951 (29 May) listed the various City organisations which have sprung to Mr McCullagh's aid in his hour of need. They include the stock exchange (which has exonerated McCullagh once and is wearily conducting another long investigation), Kleinwort Benson, Mercury Asset Management, Cameron McKenna, Slaughter & May, Ludgate PR and the *Evening Standard*.

To this list has now to be added the House of Commons select committee on science and technology which decided in the spring to investigate the British Biotech controversy. McCullagh, Millar and others were called to give evidence, and the tone of the questions strongly suggested that the whistleblower would at last be supported and commended.

Instead the committee's pathetic report, published in the middle of the recess on 17 August, concludes: "It is not our role to pass judgement on alleged misdemeanours nor to assess the propriety of personal share dealings and we make no attempt to do so."

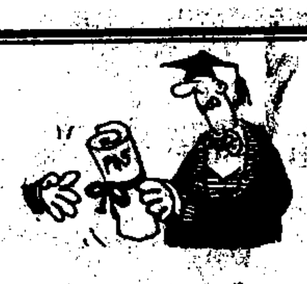
The committee's only comment on the dispute between Dr Millar and the company was typically evasive: "Dr Millar's actions in briefing Perpetual, while certainly unusual, seem more the product of difficulties at British Biotech than the origin of them." There is not a word about the right or the duty of an employee to speak out if he or she believes the company is fooling or ripping off the public, nor about the disgraceful sacking and smearing of Andrew Millar.

The committee chairman, Tory MP Dr Michael Clark, parliamentary adviser to the Royal Society of Chemistry, did not turn up for the press conference. This was chaired by Dr Alan W. Williams (Labour, Carmarthen) who whined: "It is not the committee's role to apportion blame." Later Dr Williams recorded his "personal view" that he was "deeply impressed by Dr Millar's integrity and the quality of his evidence". Another committee member, Dr Ian Gibson (Labour, Norwich North), said: "Dr Millar is an excellent scientist and an excellent witness... If I had been in his position I would have done the same thing."

The select committee has a big Labour majority — the other Labour MPs on it are Nigel Beard, Claire Curtis-Thomas, Lynne Jones, Ashok Kumar, Desmond Turner. There is also a Liberal: Nigel Jones. How eight Lib-Lab MPs contrived to leave a victimised whistleblower in the lurch and follow their three Tory colleagues into "not taking sides" is yet another mystery of this supine parliament.

Millar wrote to Clark asking if there was anything the committee could do to bring about a "speedy and just resolution to my situation". A sniffy reply came on 22 September from Jessica Muller, clerk to the committee: "Dr Clark has asked me to tell you that he does not think it would be appropriate for him to take any action which could be interpreted as taking sides in legal proceedings." So any company which sacks and smears a whistleblower now knows how to escape the long arm of parliament: issue a writ.

High Principals



THE MARCO POLO TEAM

STERN and sharp were the letters sent out to college principals and chairmen of college corporations by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) on 17 July.

They highlighted "the importance of setting limits on travel, subsistence and other expenses". On foreign travel, college managers were ordered to "consider the following questions", of which the first two were: "Is the journey essential? Could the objectives for the journey be achieved by other means such as video conferencing or teleconferencing?"

Not much later came an FEFC report on education in Singapore. The FEFC tells the *Eye* the report was compiled by a team of four inspectors from the FEFC — Mark Griffiths, Tim Clark, Jean Cook and Rhys Evans. They flew to Singapore in October 1996 and stayed at the Marco Polo hotel for a week. The flights cost the taxpayer £800; the subsistence $136 dollars a day per inspector; the hotel £931, the hire of a minibus £570 and the publishing and circulation of the report £3,530 — a total of £13,500.

The whole trip was such a success that two more teams of inspectors flew out to the Far East, one to Malaysia, the other to South Korea, in March this year. These trips cost £12,000 each. Their purpose, a spokesman explained, was to fulfil the inspectorate's terms of reference, which included a requirement to "keep abreast of international developments". The *Eye* asked the same sort of questions that the FEFC asks colleges. Was it really essential for these teams to go all the way to the Far East to keep abreast of developments? Could this "keeping abreast" have just as well been achieved by videos, etc? And were the trips value for money? The answers were "Yes", "No, it's much better to go to the places and see for yourself" and "Yes". The spokesman added: "These were busy trips — definitely not junkets".

NEW TERM NEWS FROM OLD EYE FAVOURITES

DONCASTER COLLEGE (where principal Terry Ashurst's wife Nina is personnel director): Ashurst has appointed local head teacher Peter Morley to the governing body. Morley fulfils the first qualification for governor: his wife Pat is on the staff — head of business and European studies.

EAST ANGLIA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY (where Jonathan Jenkins was not a great success as a lecturer at the Business School, whose head at the time of his appointment was his father Prof Hugh Jenkins): The university, in the shape of its sensitive secretary Hugh Bennett, complained to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) about the reporting of its recent troubles in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. The complaint has been rejected.

WAKEFIELD COLLEGE (where three lecturers, on behalf of another 50, won their cases for unfair dismissal): Compensation for the 50 has been held up pending an appeal by the college. The whole case seems to have been a bit much for principal John Muskett, who has retired on grounds of ill health.

The At Home Secretary

REPRESSIVE governments all over the world are queuing up to take advantage of the new anti-terrorism law rushed through parliament in a single day during the summer holidays.

First in line has been Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, minister of the interior of Bahrain, where parliamentary elections were abolished 23 years ago and where opponents of the government are systematically locked up without trial and tortured.

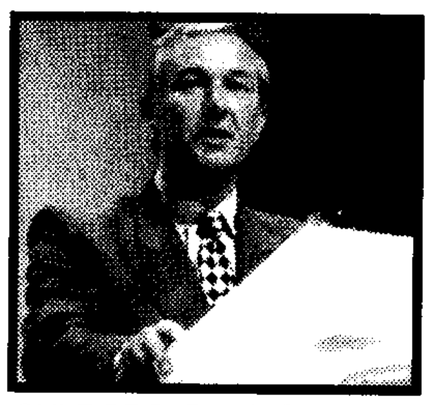
The Bahraini government, which consists almost entirely of the Al Khalifa family, has for a long time targeted a small group of Bahraini dissidents in London. On 17 September, the interior minister flew to London for a pre-arranged meeting with home secretary Jack Straw. At the meeting Al Khalifa outlined in detail the "evidence" that dissidents in London were plotting the violent overthrow of the Al Khalifa regime; and insisted that the new laws be used to arrest, charge and convict the dissidents.

Perhaps he was hoping for a response as prompt as the one he got in May 1990, when he visited the then home secretary David Waddington with similar demands. The following day four Bahraini dissidents in London were arrested under the prevention of terrorism act, locked up for four days, interrogated by MI6 and (since there was not a scrap of evidence against any of them) released without charge.

The *Eye* asked the home office what happened at the meeting this September. A spokesman said: "It was a private meeting and we cannot comment about the details of what was said. If anyone has evidence about terrorist conspiracy in London they should give it to the police. If the minister was asking the home secretary to shut the dissidents up, then the answer was no."

Why did Straw agree so quickly to meet Al Khalifa on such a fatuous agenda? He knows perfectly well that the Bahraini government's record on human rights is an international scandal. He also knows that the absurdly rich Khalifa family are specially partial to British armaments.

Since "new" Labour came to office with its new dedication to a foreign policy based on human rights, 24 export licences have been granted for the sale of military equipment, all of it "lethal", to Bahrain. British-made mines, rockets, bombs, tanks, torpedoes, grenades, rockets, missiles, mortars, howitzers and targeting computers have poured into Manama in ever-increasing quantities. Most of this equipment is for use against the Bahraini people. The Khalifas' armed forces have recently been supplemented by some 8,000 mercenaries from Syria who are paid £1,200 a month (about 12 times the rate in the Syrian army). In a letter on 21 September to defence secretary George Robertson, Lord Avebury said the recruitment of the Syrians "appears to constitute an attempt to alter the demographic balance of Bahrain in favour of the Sunnis" (the minority which includes the Khalifa family).



GULF PRO: Derek Fatchett

Straw's open door to the Bahraini interior minister is nothing new. The two governments are constantly cosying up to one another. Derek Fatchett, once an implacable opponent of the Bahraini dictatorship, now minister of state at the foreign office, was in Manama recently giving a grovelling interview to the servile *Gulf Daily News*. And Lord Gilbert, minister of state for defence, has been there twice in the last year flogging weaponry.

Sick transit...

Private Fortunes PFI Incorporated

SIR Clive Thompson has all the necessary qualifications to join the government's exciting new private finance initiative plans for new hospitals.

1 He is chairman of Rentokil, whose Initial subsidiaries provide services in hospitals.

2 He is a director of Imperial Tobacco, whose main product, cigarettes, gets so many people into hospital.

3 He is a Tory who still worships Margaret Thatcher.

4 He detests trade unions — he recently described dealing with them as "pest control".

5 Last year he took £1,455,000 (up £225,000 from the previous year) out of his company.

RATMAN: Sir Clive

6 He is almost hysterically opposed to the minimum wage.

These are all reasons Sir Clive's company has been chosen by the Labour government to take part in PFI hospital consortia, and specifically to run "hotel services" (cooking, cleaning, portering, washing, etc) for the North Durham Acute Hospitals Trust and the Bromley Hospitals NHS Trust.

SIR PETER'S FRIENDS

THE MAN & ARMS: Sir Peter Inge

OBSERVERS of the hearings at the Scott inquiry into arms for Iraq were often shaken by the speed and frequency with which top government defence officers swapped places with directors of arms companies. Not much has changed since Scott.

Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge was hardly out of his chair as chief of the defence staff when he applied to be an adviser to Vickers, an arms firm, a director of Racal, an arms firm, and a consultant to British Aerospace, an arms firm. He was told to wait six months before joining the first two firms and 12 months before negotiating any government contract for British Aerospace.

As soon as the time limits were up he joined all three. His example was followed by Sir Moray Stewart KCB, second permanent secretary at the ministry of defence, who has moved smoothly, and without objection, out of the MoD into a consultancy with Short Brothers (an arms firm, in case you were wondering).

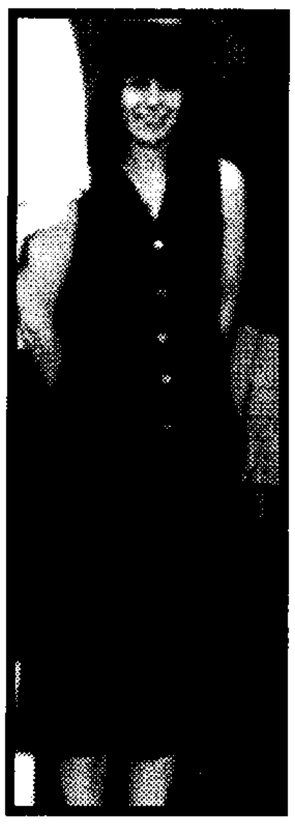
HALOW AND GOODBYE

HALOW (London) is a small charity set up five years ago by Mrs Julie Robertson who was shocked at the difficulties and expense of visiting her husband, then in Whitemoor prison.

Since the charity got an office in 1994 its turnover has expanded from nothing to £100,000. Funded mainly by charities, it provides bus services for prisoners' families to 18 prisons. It recently started a highly successful and popular escort service for children visiting parents in prison. This represents about a quarter of the charity's work and is paid for, trip by trip, by the prison service.

Mrs Robertson and Halow are entirely independent of the prison service and from time to time speak out strongly against the ill-treatment (especially strip-searching) of prisoners' relatives. Such comments have made Mrs Robertson and her charity rather unpopular in the official service.

On her travels to Whitemoor Mrs Robertson met Doug Arnold, an elderly man who was also visiting a prisoner. Mr Arnold strongly supported Halow and volunteered to help. He was vetted for criminal convictions — he had none. He told Mrs Robertson he had worked for the Boy Scouts. She contacted the Scouts who told her they could not give him an unqualified reference because of an unsubstantiated complaint from a boy about sexual abuse nearly 20 years ago. Nevertheless, the Scouts confirmed, they had continued to employ him.



JULIE ROBERTSON

Mrs Robertson promptly banned Mr Arnold from any work connected with children and made him agree not to bring any young people onto the premises or involve them in any way with the charity. On that basis he worked unpaid in the office on routine photocopying and, as treasurer, helped with the accounts. When in July last year he broke this agreement by bringing a young man into the Halow offices, Mrs Robertson promptly sacked him.

A few weeks later he was convicted of possessing paedophiliac material and fined £1,000. Mrs Robertson knew nothing of this charge. As soon as she heard of the conviction, she told the prison service security division. The reaction was swift. All prison service funds for the charity's children's escort services were abruptly cut off. Prison governors were advised to "suspend all dealings with Halow (London)".

A memo to all prisons signed by Mrs Audrey Wickington, a senior official at prison service headquarters, alleged: "The police investigation into this matter reveals strong suspicions that Mr Arnold has been using his position at Halow London to assist paedophile activity, particularly with regard to the escort services and the selection of residents at Halow London's premises".

In fact, the children's escort service was run entirely by women who were approved childminders. Arnold had absolutely nothing to do with them. He had no contact either with the selection of residents in the few properties owned by Halow, which were let and run entirely by Mrs Robertson. The memo ended: "You will wish to note that Mrs Robertson is adept at approaching the prison service from many directions and can be a volatile and difficult person with whom to deal."

It was several months before Mrs Robertson managed to get a copy of the memo. When she threatened to sue for libel, the prison service begged her to discuss the matter instead. She discussed it. The funds for her escort service were not renewed. There was no apology.

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

LADBROKE would seem to be just as unpopular with some former executives as it is with the government which has blocked its takeover of the Coral betting shops.

There is much talk about the assorted perks to which senior executives — by no means low paid — have made themselves accustomed. These include not just perks for which Ladbroke shareholders pick up the tab, but also those for which suppliers seeking continued essential goodwill are encouraged to pay. It has also been claimed that cosy deals have been done with cronies for the supply of goods and services.

Some of these embarrassing-if-true allegations were set to be aired at industrial tribunals or in court, but settlements ensured silence from embittered executives.

The twin Ladbroke arms of Hilton hotels and the betting business mean there are ample opportunities for executives to enjoy the benefit of travel, good food, fine wines and sporting events free or at concessionary rates, as well as access to contractors available to help out with work on executives' homes.

No doubt most senior executives do not avail themselves of such perks which would be contrary to Ladbroke company policy. But it would seem some may have been less restrained. Just who in senior management has taken advantage of such opportunities is hard to confirm. However, there have been internal inquiries into allegations of abuse. These are said to have refuted most if not all of the allegations which are said to have been made by sacked or retired ex-employees with a grudge.

Among the allegations has been the claim that work has been done on executives' private homes by regular contractors for which either they did not charge or the company paid. This includes mention of central heating, roofs and gardens. Then there are claims that cases of champagne and expensive wines together with food have been supplied free or at low, low prices.

Another area which has attracted allegations concerns the swapping of hotel rooms for flights with airlines enabling executives to travel free. The company is said to be generous in allowing executives and their close family or friends to fly Concorde, and first or business class. The provision of top range cars is said to be equally generous.

Hard-to-get tickets for major sporting events are also said to be often available. Sometimes these are provided by grateful suppliers. On two occasions suppliers are said to have been so grateful they paid for two weeks' Caribbean holidays for executives.

Not surprisingly there have been suggestions that some executives had been far too close to certain suppliers who had been awarded sweetheart deals at above-market prices.

Certain of these allegations have been investigated by Ladbroke and appropriate action taken where evidence was available. Ladbroke is said to have appropriate internal controls to prevent such abuses and ensure any company benefits are declared as required. When company contractors or staff are employed privately, executives are expected to pay. Claims to the contrary are dismissed as unproven, malicious or both.

THE Serious Farce Office (SFO) is said to be at last poised to decide whether to prosecute the mad and bad Peter "Polaroid" Young over the £400m losses his self-serving investments cost Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. It is now two years since the SFO raided the fund manager's home. The expectation is that Young and possibly one or two others will be charged in the near future.

If so that will concentrate attention on that other even longer running high profile SFO investigation into the 1996 collapse of the Facia retail group. But now the SFO's decision there may well have been further delayed by the July arrest in Germany of Facia chairman Stephen Hinchliffe's partner Christopher Harrison.

The fact that the Germans — hardly rush-to-judgement merchants — have moved on a simpler post-Facia matter while the SFO continued to probe the Facia forest suggests the fraudbusters have still not learned the benefit of expedited investigations. Now any decision to prosecute Hinchliffe may need to wait on Harrison's trial. And what if he is jailed?

Judges increasingly press for the "best shot" tactic of fewer charges and fewer defendants to cut the inexcusable £600m a year legal aid bill — 40 percent of the total — for over-long fraud trials. Similarly the SFO should revert to its former supposed deadline of charging within 12 months instead of adopting the Parkinson principle that investigations expand to meet the unlimited time available. All that often achieves is evidential overload and increased opportunities for the defence to exploit.

RUMBLINGS over the shortlived Pronto rapid draw lottery continue. More writs or threats of writs have been issued against the warring Pronto partners InterLotto and Elliott Bernerd's MMK UK, who are fighting over what can be saved from the wreckage.

The £30m Pronto fiasco is said to be a matter of increasing sensitivity between Bernerd and his main backer Nina Wang, who is said to have lost out now in two failed lottery projects, first in Russia and now in Britain.

The Hong Kong based multi-millionairess is now the largest shareholder in Bernerd's Chelsfield property group. She has been increasing her stake curiously at the same time as the unloved Elliott was reducing his interest. In May 1997 Wang's offshore company held 31 million Chelsfield shares or 13.6 percent and Bernerd's offshore company almost 38m or 16.2 percent. But a year on the Wang stake was up to 33.6m or 14 percent while Bernerd's had been cut to 33.2m. Sadly the share price has also hit the skids, down from over 400p to around 250p.

Meanwhile it seems that another Bernerd associate, the deadly Dane Jan Bonde Nielsen of Wembley infamy, has problems in Russia. Bonde Nielsen and his long time pal, property bust-out Paul "Boom Boom" Bloomfield, have long been part of the Bernerd network for Russian deals. Both have often been spotted in the discreet London offices off

"We'll have to sell everything and live in a box!" A P Singleton

Oxford Street from which Bernerd runs his non-Chelsfield operations. Recently it seems that another old Russia hand, the not so gorgeous George Walker of Brent Walker, may also have been talking business with Bernerd.

Bonde Nielsen's latest problems relate to a serious dispute between the Russian oil company Tebukneft where he is chairman and the authorities in the far north Komi republic. Tebukneft is reported to have had its bank accounts seized after it sued the local government. The company is controlled by Bonde Nielsen and his associates. Its oil is marketed by another Bonde Nielsen entity. But that would now seem all to be at risk. Hopefully this does not mean another headache for Bernerd and his rich groupies.

FANTASY financier Larry Gillick, last heard of relieving the Salvation Army of $1.25m on the security of a Highland pub, is back in business. Gillick obtained the Army money as a loan after the charity was conned by others into investing in the non-existent high return, standby letter of credit market.

Gillick has formed for the third time Single Market Securities — this time in Scotland. SMS was the company Gillick used when purporting to be able to help Terry Venables buy Tottenham Hotspur in 1991. Gillick has been living in Largs since he returned from a lengthy stay abroad with the unlikely combination of the Salvation Army and London's premier gangsters the Adams family in pursuit.

The Army obtained judgement against Gillick — who was fortunate to avoid prosecution — and ended up with the pub. What the Adams brothers grim got back was never clear. But clearly they made Gillick an offer he could not refuse — they let him live.

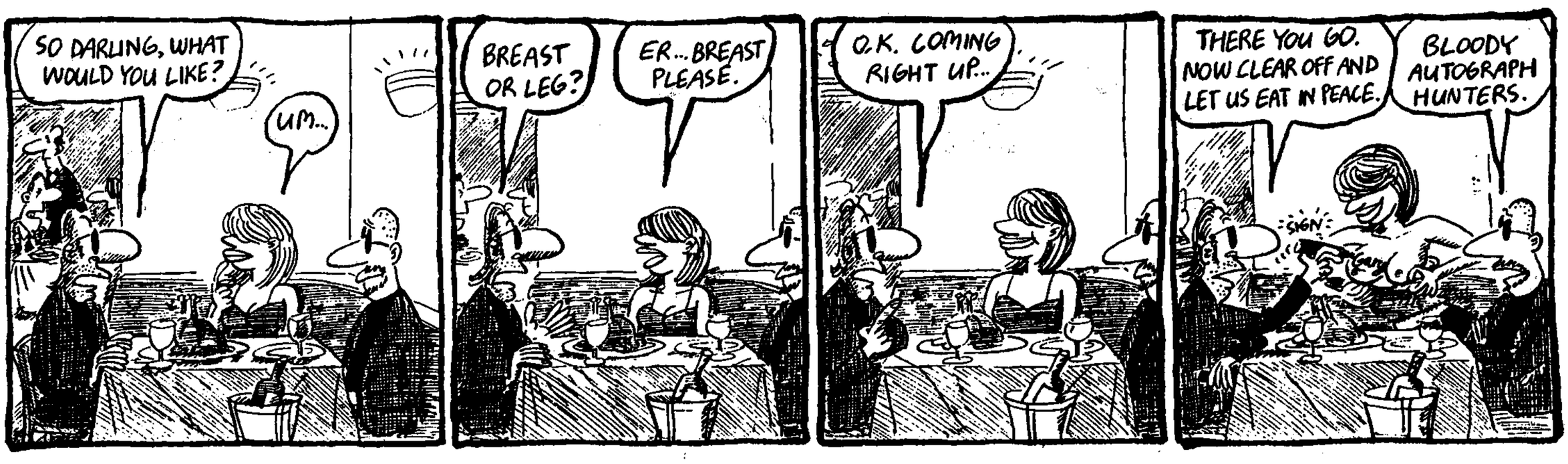
TORY fundraiser Alan Lewis would also seem to have friends in "new" Labour. His offshore-controlled Hartley Property Trust seems set to make a multi-million pound profit from a controversial executive home development at Longsford Mill near Nailsworth, Gloucestershire.

The £4m project has been given planning permission by Labour-controlled Stroud district council, reversing an earlier decision despite vocal opposition to the plans for the listed buildings on heritage and environmental grounds. Protesters are now relying on Cotswold district council which has yet to decide on the Longsford Mill scheme.

'Slicker'

Celeb

LIGGER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age of consent

time to end inequality and lower the age of consent

Since the consensus is that heterosexual men and women are capable of sufficient maturity at 16 to have sex, then there are no grounds for preventing homosexuals from doing so. Such discrimination has no place as we approach the millennium and today's vote will be a small but important step in modernising Britain.

single parents

lecturing on morals will not cure society's ills

The Government-backed Institute for the Family must take care not to become a moralising, patronising institution. While the Government may want to encourage two-parent families, it is not its place to dictate that this is the "best" way to bring up children.

the lords

blair must not bow to peer pressure on vital reforms

If the peers are after a fight, they should be given one. Their case is non-existent and the Government should show up their wrecking efforts.

sink estates

save sink estates from going down the plughole

For too long, politicians have ghettoised the problems of sink estates. The idea that increasing prosperity for all would have a "trickle down" effect on those living in high-rise blocks in deprived areas has been exposed as a myth. A deprived area remains a deprived area - and blights the wider area around it - unless tackled by the Government.

europe

Despite Mr Blair's praise for the single currency yesterday, the Government is not openly embracing the Euro. The Euro is up and away and we are left on the tarmac. We are missing out on many of the benefits of the free market. In doing so we take much of the pain of European membership without the gain.

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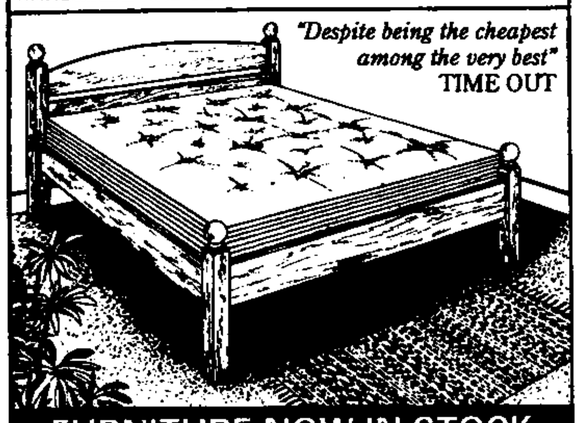

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drink

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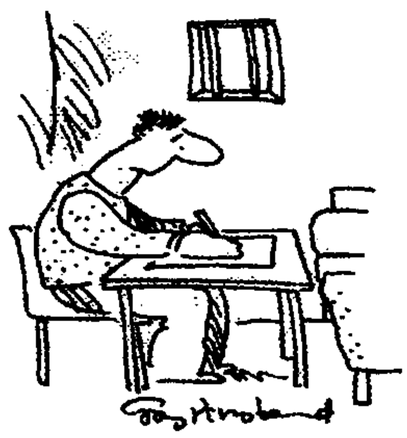

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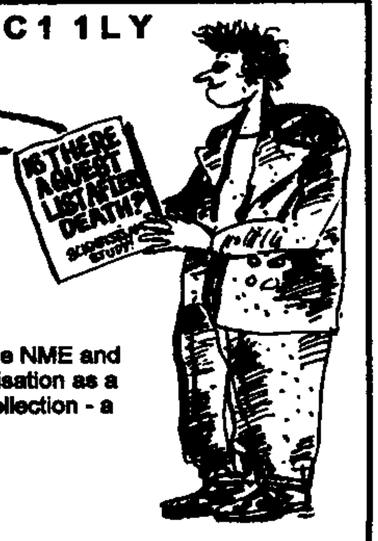

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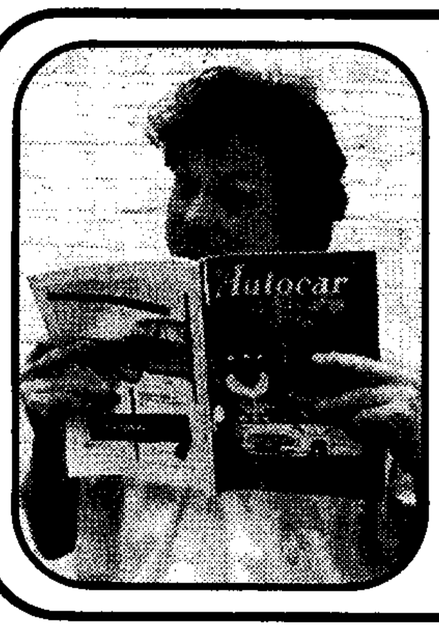

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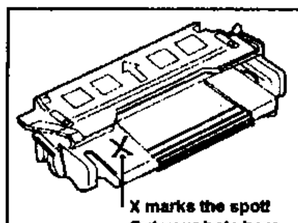

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'Chief Sub', *The Journalist* magazine

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SPEECHWRITING by Mitch Murray – see page 30.

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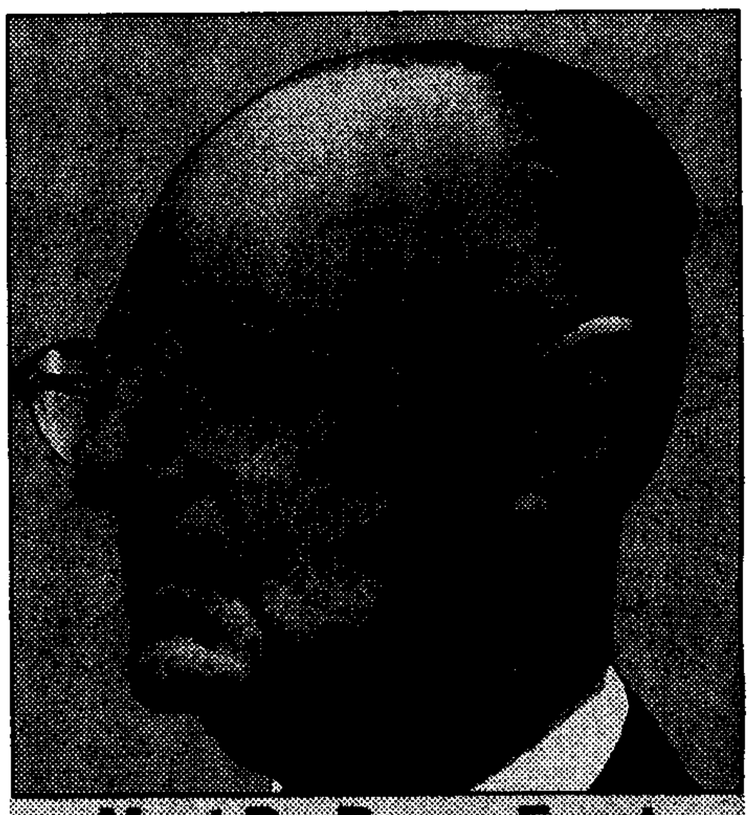

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